A Comparative Corpus Study on Intensifiers in Canadian English and New Zealand English

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Tutkin tässä Pro Gradu –tutkielmassa englannin kielen vahvistussanoja. Vahvistussanat ovat adverbeja, joita käytetään nimensä mukaisesti vahvistamaan merkityksiä lauseessa. Yleisimpiä vahvistussanoja aiempien tutkimusten valossa ovat olleet esimerkiksi *very*, *really* ja *so*. Laadin viisi erillistä tutkimuskysymystä, jotka käsittelevät vahvistussanojen yleisyyttä, sukupuolen vaikutusta vahvistussanojen käyttöön ja valintaan, iän vaikutusta vahvistussanojen käyttöön ja valintaan, puhutun kielen kategorian vaikutusta vahvistussanojen yleisyyteen sekä vahvistussanojen esiintymistä attributiivisten ja predikatiivisten adjektiivien kanssa.

Rajasin tutkimukseni puhuttuun kieleen, koska aiemmissa tutkimuksissa vahvistussanojen on osoitettu olevan yleisempiä puhutussa kielessä kuin kirjoitetussa kielessä. Aineistonani ovat kaksi korpusta: *The International Corpus of English: Canada* (ICE-CAN) ja *The International Corpus of English: New Zealand* (ICE-NZ). Valitsin näissä korpuksissa edustetut englannin kielen varieteetit, koska ne ovat kehittyneet historiallisesti eri aikaan ja ne sijaitsevat maantieteellisesti kaukana toisistaan. Vahvistussanojen on osoitettu olevan yleisimpiä adjektiivien määritteinä, joten valitsin tutkimuksen kohteeksi vahvistussanat tässä kontekstissa.

Sekä ICE-CAN että ICE-NZ on koottu saman mallin mukaisesti 1990-luvulla. Kaikkien ICE-korpusten tavoitesanamäärä on miljoona sanaa, josta puhuttua kieltä edustaa 600000 sanaa ja kirjoitettua vastaavasti 400000 sanaa. Sekä puhuttu että kirjoitettu osa on jaettu edelleen useaan pienempään osaan, joka mahdollistaa erilaisten kategorioiden välisen vertailun. Katkelmien tavoitepituus on ollut 2000 sanaa. Korpusten samankaltaisuus mahdollistaa niiden vertailun ja se on lisäksi helppoa sekä mielekästä.

Aikaisemmissa tutkimuksissa on todettu, että vahvistussanojen käyttö korreloi iän ja sukupuolen kanssa. Nuorempien puhujien on osoitettu käyttävän enemmän vahvistussanoja kuin vanhempien. Lisäksi naisten on todettu käyttävän enemmän vahvistussanoja puheessaan kuin miesten. Tutkimuksessani käytetty metodi on korpuslingvistiikka, joka mahdollistaa suuren aineiston käytön.

Tutkimukseni tulokset olivat melko samankaltaisia molempien korpusten osalta. Molemmissa korpuksissa yleisimmät vahvistussanat olivat *very*, *really*, *so* ja *pretty*. Naiset käyttivät vahvistussanoja hieman enemmän kuin miehet molemmissa korpuksissa. Vahvistussanojen käyttö laski ikäryhmän mukaan nuoremmasta vanhempaan kanadanenglannin korpuksessa, mutta toisaalta tulokset olivat päinvastaiset uudenseelanninenglannin osalta. Käsikirjoitetussa puheessa vältettiin vahvistussanaa *really* ja *very* oli todella suosittu. Suurin osa valituista yhdestätoista vahvistussanasta olivat yleisempiä predikatiivisten adjektiivien kanssa, joka tukee väitettä niiden kieliopillistumisesta.

Avainsanat: vahvistussanat, korpuslingvistiikka, sosiolingvistiikka

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

There are multiple ways to emphasize or stress what one is saying. One of these measures is to use adverbs that give special emphasis to what one is conveying. These adverbs are called intensifiers, such words as *absolutely*, *extremely*, *very*, and *really*. Intensifiers (degree modifiers, degree words) are an interesting subject to study based on two characteristics; firstly, because of their versatility and color, and secondly, because of their capacity for rapid change and recycling of forms (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003, 258). It has also been noted by Barnfield and Buchstaller that the use of intensifiers seems to be on the rise across time (2010, 261). This is one additional reason to study their use and makes the topic more current. For this thesis, I will restrict the analysis of intensifiers only to adjectival heads as it is by far the commonest position in which intensifiers occur (Bäcklund 1973, 279).

Spoken language offers great means to study language variation and change as language change is facilitated by linguistic innovations or new, individual uses that may become part of the linguistic system (Milroy and Milroy 1997, 51). Milroy and Milroy (1997, 52) comment:"[S]ometimes change is rapid and sometimes it is slow, but there is no reason to believe that there can ever be a time when a spoken language is completely stable". Indeed, it has been demonstrated in previous studies that there is variation and change in the use of intensifiers. Variation is apparent across time and between social groupings and even changes in progress have been found (see for instance Ito & Tagliamonte 2003, Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005 and Barnfield & Buchstaller 2010).

The motivation for choosing New Zealand English (hereafter NZE) and Canadian English (hereafter CanE) is that these varieties have their origins in different times of the expansion of English: CanE is an older variety, as English spread to the Americas in the late 1600s and NZE is a newer variety as English spread to New Zealand as late as the 1800s (Trudgill & Hannah 2002, 4). Additionally, the varieties are spoken far from each other, CanE on the Northern Hemisphere whereas NZE is a Southern Hemisphere variety. This could make a difference in the choice and frequency of

intensifier as Trudgill (2000, 24) states that the farther away two varieties are from each other, the more dissimilar they are linguistically. Lastly, the majority of studies on intensifiers are conducted on British English and American English, therefore I wanted to avoid studying them.

It is only natural to use precompiled spoken corpora to study variation and change in the intensification system as they are the most readily available samples of spoken language. Hence, I chose two corpora, the International Corpus of English – New Zealand (hereafter ICE-NZ) and the International Corpus of English – Canada (hereafter ICE-CAN), to study the use of intensifiers. The primary reason for the choice of the spoken transcripts as the source of data is that intensifiers are more common in spoken than in written language, but also the fact that spoken language is constantly changing.

I have a certain set of research tasks that I will set out to achieve in this Master's Thesis. First of all, I will examine the use of intensifiers in two varieties of English, namely CanE and NZE, hence, the first goal of my thesis will be to find out which intensifiers are most common in each variety. Secondly, as intensifiers have shown variation between social groups in previously conducted studies, I want to examine whether the extra-linguistic factors, age and gender, play a role in the frequency and choice of intensifier. There is an underlying assumption that younger speakers and women use more intensifiers in their speech, thus I will set out to test this hypothesis of the influence of these extra-linguistic factors. Thirdly, I want to examine different contexts, so I will examine parts of the spoken category, unscripted and scripted passages, more closely to examine the use of intensifiers in spontaneous speech versus scripted text types that are closer to written registers. Lastly, I am interested in the delexicalization of intensifiers so I choose to analyze two contexts for this thesis, attributive adjectives and predicative adjectives. By this comparison, I will be able to give reasons for the grammaticalization of the intensifier and to show which intensifiers are further in the delexicalization process. These research tasks translate into five separate research questions:

1. Which intensifiers are most common in each variety of English and why are they most common?

2. Does the gender of the speaker affect the choice and frequency of intensifiers and why?
3. Does the age of the speaker affect the choice and frequency of intensifiers and why?
4. Which intensifiers are most common in scripted and in unscripted sections of the ICE corpora?
5. Which context, attributive or predicative, do the selected intensifiers occur most? What might be the reason for this?

The structure of this thesis is as follows. In Chapter 2, I will give the theoretical framework for the study at hand, where I will discuss the labelling of intensifiers, then I give a short historical account of intensifiers, followed by an analysis of the development of intensifiers and the grammaticalization processes and lastly, I will introduce selected previously conducted studies that are relevant to the field. In chapter 3, I will introduce the methodology used in this thesis. Firstly, I will introduce the corpora used as the data for my thesis, followed by an introduction to the fields of corpus linguistics and comparative sociolinguistics. Next, some considerations regarding corpus design and the representativeness of a corpus are put forth. Then, I will give a theoretical framework for the extra-linguistic variables, gender and age, studied in the thesis. Lastly, I will circumscribe the dependent variable context under investigation in this study. In chapter 4, I will analyze the corpora in separate sections in relation to previously conducted studies and general theories presented in this thesis. In chapter 5, I will summarize the most important results obtained from the corpora, and lastly in chapter 6, I will give a conclusion for my thesis.

2. Intensifiers

In this chapter the theory and background of intensifiers is presented to give a framework for the study at hand. Firstly, in section 2.1, the labelling of intensifiers is introduced with the help of various grammars and earlier works. The terminology is also chosen for this study in this section. Secondly, in section 2.2, I will give the historical background of intensifiers with a series of examples that show which intensifiers have been most popular in each period of English. Thirdly, in section 2.3, the formation of intensifiers is discussed including the processes of grammaticalization, delexicalization, recycling, renewal and layering. Lastly, in section 2.4, selected studies conducted previously are presented to give more information on the frequencies of intensifiers and the social factors age and gender.

2.1 Labels employed for intensifiers

Intensifiers have been studied for over a century and logically there have been many attempts to categorize the different forms of intensifiers. In this section of the thesis, I will present some categorizations of intensifiers presented in various grammars and earlier works.

Bäcklund uses the term *adverbs of degree* to refer to intensifiers in his Doctoral Thesis (1973, 5). In the thesis, Bäcklund has divided adverbs of degree into subgroups based on their semantic value on a scale of rising degree (1973, 14). Paradis (2000, 148) applies the term *reinforcers* to refer to the words of degree that denote the upper point in the scale of degree, e.g. *very*. In Paradis' classification, reinforcers are followed by *moderators* (e.g. *quite*) in the middle of an imaginary scale and the lowest point on that scale are *diminishers* (e.g. *a bit*) (Paradis 2000, 148).

Bolinger uses the terms *degree words* (1972, 18) and *intensifiers* (1972, 17) and comments that he uses the term *intensifier* for all words that scale a quality in some direction. All intensifiers are further divided into four sub-groups based on the direction of scaling; up, down or somewhere in between (ibid.). For Bolinger, the highest point in the scale are *boosters* e.g. ”He is *terribly* selfish”

(ibid.). Boosters are followed by *compromizers* in the middle of the scale, denoting a slightly lower degree e.g. ”He is *fairly* happy” (ibid.). The next category in Bolinger's scale are *diminishers* that are the lower part of the middle of the scale, denoting a lower degree e.g. ”They were *little* disposed” (ibid.). *Minimizers* represent the lowest end of the scale of degree e.g. ”He's a *bit* of an idiot” (ibid.).

Quirk et al. (1973, 438) use the term *intensifier* for words that either have a heightening or lowering effect on a unit in a sentence. Quirk et al. further divide intensifiers into three sub-categories: *emphasizers*, *amplifiers* and *downtoners* (1973, 439). Two of these three categories of intensifiers have their sub-groupings (ibid.). Amplifiers are further divided into *maximizers* (e.g. *completely*) and *boosters* (e.g. *very much*) (ibid.). Quirk et al. (1985, 590) state that amplifiers form an open class of adverbs as new words are constantly added to replace older forms which ”follow the trend of hyperbole in rapidly growing ineffectual”. Downtoners are divided into four subgroups: *compromizers* (e.g. *kind of*), *diminishers* (e.g. *partly*), *minimizers* (e.g. *hardly*) and *approximators* (e.g. *almost*) (ibid.).

Huddleston and Pullum refer to intensifiers by the labels *degree modifiers*, *degree adverbs* and *degree adjuncts* (2002: 583, 721-725). Degree adjunct are further divided into seven subgroups (*maximal*, *multal*, *moderate*, *paucal*, *minimal*, *approximating* and *relative*) (2002, 721-725). Huddleston and Pullum state that the maximal and multal categories represent greater lexical variation and by that, these categories have far more members than the five other groups (ibid.). The maximal subgroup (e.g. *absolutely*, *completely*) is at the top of a scale of degree and the multal subgroup (e.g. *deeply*, *greatly*) covers a range from midpoint to near the top end (ibid.). The moderate subgroup (e.g. *partly*, *quite*, *rather*) represents a slightly lesser degree and is located close to the middle of the imaginary scale of degree (ibid.). The paucal subgroup (*a bit*, *little*) is lower than the middle of the scale and is followed by the minimal subgroup (e.g. *hardly*, *scarcely*) that represents a lower degree (ibid.). The last two subgroups in Huddleston and Pullum's categorization (ibid.) are the approximating subgroup (*almost*, *kind of*) and the relative subgroup (e.g. *enough*, *sufficiently*). As can be deduced from the examples, these categories do not represent a lesser degree, but have an

approximating or quantifying function.

Biber et al. use the term *adverbs of degree* to talk about adverbs that scale a quality in some way (1999, 554). Those adverbs that scale a quality up are labelled *amplifiers* or *intensifiers* and those that scale a quality down are labelled either *diminishers* or *downtoners* (1999, 554-555). Comparing this classification to Quirk et al. we see that *intensifiers* have a more restricted role in Biber et al. as they only refer to those adverbs that scale upwards, compared to Quirk et al.'s definition in which *intensifiers* also includes downtoning adverbs of degree. These categorizations are listed in table 1.

Scholar	**Labels on an imaginary scale of degree**
Bolinger (1972)	Boosters, Compromizers Diminishers, Minimizers
Quirk et al. (1973)	Maximizers, Boosters, Approximators, Compromizers, Diminishers, Minimizers
Huddleston & Pullum (2002)	Maximal, Multal, Moderate, Paucal, Minimal
Biber et al. (1999)	Amplifiers / Intensifiers Diminishers / Downtoners

Table 1: Labels on an imaginary scale of degree.

Recent studies (Tagliamonte 2008, Ito & Tagliamonte 2003 and Barnfield & Buchstaller 2010) that have examined *intensifiers* have included the words that scale a quality upwards (boosters and maximizers), but have chosen to leave out downtoning intensifiers. This is based on an argument that intensifiers scaling upwards are more frequent and they are generally a more interesting subject to study than those that have a downtoning effect (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003, 258). In this thesis, I will use the categorization by Quirk et al. (1973, 439) and focus my attention on words that scale a quality upwards (maximizers and boosters). I will apply the umbrella term intensifier to account for both of these categories.

The problem with so many different terms applied for intensifiers is that people get mixed up as there are so many categorizations, as mentioned above, that do not have corresponding labels and

sometimes their labels may even be contradictory to each other. A couple of controversial examples are represented by the intensifiers *quite* and *pretty*, as they can both be described as having an intensifying as well as a downtoning effect depending on the context in which it is uttered as well as the manner of intonation. Biber et al. remark (1999, 556) that when *quite* occurs with gradables that denote an absolute end-point on a scale, *quite* often means ”to some extent” (e.g. *quite* nice), but with non-gradables it has the meaning of ”completely” (e.g. *quite* motionless). The case of *pretty* is also sometimes ambiguous, as listed in The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) (2016: s.v. pretty, adv. 1a): ”[q]ualifying an adjective or adverb: to a considerable extent; fairly, moderately; rather, quite. In later use also: very.” This quotation from the *OED* suggests that in today's use *pretty* is used for both meanings. Taken alongside with the comment made by Stoffel (1901, 153) of *pretty* expressing a high degree in contemporary use and adding the comment presented by Tagliamonte (2008, 370) that in Toronto, *pretty* scales a quality upwards, would suggest that the intensifier *pretty* scales upwards in contemporary usage. Based on these theories, I will treat *pretty* as an intensifier scaling upwards in this thesis.

2.2 Historical background

Intensifiers have been a topic of study in historical linguistics too, and their use has been traced back hundreds of years (see for instance Nevalainen 2008 and Peters 1994). These historical developments have plenty to do with the grammaticalization processes discussed in section 2.3. Historical studies provide useful insight into the study of intensification today that is conducted partly based on the historical developments.

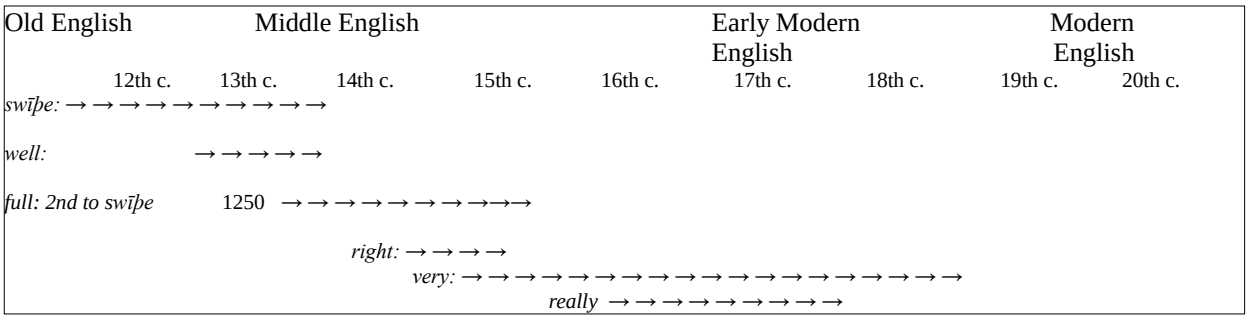


Figure 1. Most popular intensifiers in the history of English (based on Ito and Tagliamonte 2003, 260).

In the twelfth century, the intensifier *swīþe* (1) was most popularly used in English and in the thirteenth century it was replaced by *well* (2), which in turn was replaced by *full* (3) and *full* was replaced by *right* (4) in the 15th century (Mustanoja 1960, 319-327). These developments are further presented in the numbered examples below (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005, 283). Original sources are parenthesized.

1. Bute a mayden swīþe fayr ‘but a maiden very fair’ [The Lay of Havelok the Dane, c. 1280; ed. Walter W. Skeat, 2nd ed., rev. K. Sisam (Oxford: Clarendon, 1915), line 111]

2. Engelond his a wel god lond ‘England is a very good land’ [Robert of Gloucester, Metrical Chronicle, 1297; from Robert of Gloucester’s Chronicle, ed. Thomas Hearne (Oxford), line 1]

3. And Frensh she spak ful faire and fetisly ‘and French she spoke very fairly and prettily’ [Geoffrey Chaucer, “General Prologue,” Canterbury Tales, c. 1386; from The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Miffl in, 1957), line 124]

4. But ye hym myssid right sone. ‘but you him missed very recently.’ [Cursor Mundi, c. 1450; ed. Richard Morris et al., 3 vols. (London: Early English Text Society, 1874–92), line 17413]

These intensifiers were formed by means of zero derivation, but already by the Middle English period, suffixation by *-li(che)/-ly(che)* was the commonest formation process for adverbs (Nevalainen 2008, 295). This is reflected in the vast number of intensifiers that have the suffix *-ly* today.

As summarized in figure 1 above, there have been shifts in the popularity of intensifiers, in some cases the intensifier has disappeared, and sometimes they have remained in English as minor variants. One example of the use of *well* as an intensifier in the adjective premodifying position is documented by Stenström (2000, 177) in the speech of London teenagers. Stenström remarks that *well* is very rarely used as a premodifier of adjectives and restricted to a limited set of adjectives, but nonetheless, it is occurring in her data of London teenagers (2000, 177). Furthermore, Paradis found (2000, 152) in her comparative analysis of the London Lund Corpus (LLC) and the Bergen Corpus of Teenage Language (COLT) that *well* did not occur at all in the LLC and had 62 hits as a degree modifier in COLT. For one thing, Stenström comments (2000, 188) that the use of *well* as an intensifier is more

common with teenagers than in adult speech. Additionally, Paradis' findings might suggest that there is a change in progress as the older LLC data (compiled mainly in the 60s and 70s, adult speakers) did not have any hits of *well* as an intensifier, but the newer COLT data (compiled in 1993, teenage speakers) had 62 hits. These findings could be a reflection of the more important role of youngsters in language change, as the incoming form is more common in their speech than others, but slowly might be adopted by other age group members as well. This is a reflection of intensifier recycling and layering in the intensification system discussed further in section 2.3.3.

There are indications that the intensifiers most popularly used in Present-Day English appeared in English as early as the 16th century when *very* (5) and *pretty* (6) appeared in English (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005, 283). Later in the 18th century, *really* (7) appeared (ibid.). *Very* seems to have retained its place as the most popular intensifier since the Early Modern English period to this day. The numbered examples provided by Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005, 283) help to clarify the earlier uses of these intensifiers. Original sources for these examples are parenthesized.

> 5. He was a verray parfit gentil knyght. [Geoffrey Chaucer, "General Prologue," Canterbury Tales, c. 1386; from The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Miffl in, 1957), line 72]
>
> 6. Pretie hardie felow: vsed in derision. [Thomas Cooper, Thesaurus linguæ Romanæ and Britannicæ (London, 1565)]
>
> 7. This last Bill was really frightful. [Daniel Defoe, A Journal of the Plague Year, 1722; repr. as The History of the Great Plague in London (London: Noble, 1754), 5]

The historical trajectories of intensifiers are drawn based on the collocational pattern the intensifiers have. Those intensifiers that occur with predicative adjectives are thought to be older and in a later stage in the change process (Tagliamonte and Denis 2014, 116). *Very* is the prime example used in previous studies as it was firstly used with attributive adjectives and later also with predicative adjectives (ibid.).

2.3 How intensifiers evolve

The historical developments in the intensification system reflect language variation and grammatical change and the process has been called “fevered invention and competition” by Bolinger (1972, 18). New forms may be added to the intensification system by means of [-*ly*] suffixation and in fact they are added often because of the speakers' volition to be original. Sometimes adding new forms is not enough or unwanted and people begin using repetitions of intensifiers or multiple word expressions to boost the meaning of an expression to the highest degree. At the same time though, González-Diaz observes (2008, 225) that in recent years the intensifying form *very much* seems to be losing intensifying force, as would be expected reflecting the pathways of change in the intensification system. With this observation, González-Diaz refers to the intensification system being affected by multiple processes: grammaticalization, delexicalization, recycling of forms, layering, and renewal, discussed in this section of the thesis. Each of these processes reflects some aspect of the changes that occur in the intensification system that keep the category in constant fluctuation.

2.3.1 Closed and open class of adverbs

Intensifiers can be divided into two sets or classes: the open and closed class of adverbs (Lorenz: 2002, 144). These classifications are based on the quality of their members, as the closed class only comprises of intensifiers that are further in the delexicalization process (e.g. *very*), but the open class is constantly expanding by means of [-*ly*] suffixation from adjectives into adverbs (e.g. complete / complete[-*ly*]). Indeed, Nevalainen notes (2008, 291) that -*ly* adverbialization is highly productive already in Modern English and has become more productive over time. Even though the process of [-*ly*] suffixation is very productive, in most varieties of Present-Day English, degree modifiers with zero forms are very frequent compared to the use of [-*ly*] suffixed intensifiers (Nevalainen 2008, 293). This is likely to be because the zero forms are older and have gained ground through the centuries to be predominant in use today.

Additionally, Nevalainen maintains (2008, 297) that historically in English, zero forms of intensifiers have occurred more with adjectives and adverbs, hence functioning as word modifiers, whereas the intensifying *-ly* adverbs have occurred more with verbal or participial heads being subjunctives. In contemporary data, Macaulay has shown that the use of inflected intensifiers has a correlation with higher social class in Scottish English (2002, 410). Bauer and Bauer (2002, 256) hypothesize that the use of inflected intensifiers might have differing frequencies between the English of young New Zealanders and older age groups.

2.3.2 Grammaticalization and delexicalization

Hopper and Traugott (2003, 2) define historical or diachronic grammaticalization as "that subset of linguistic changes whereby a lexical item or construction in certain uses takes on grammatical characteristics, or through which a grammatical item becomes more grammatical". This is to say that intensifiers acquire more and more grammatical features as they develop and at the same time lose their lexical meaning. In the intensification system, *very* has been referred to as "a showcase example" of delexicalization by Peters (1994, 270) and as being the "most prominent case of grammaticalization" by Lorenz (2002, 145). Furthermore, Partington (1993, 183) states that *very* is the most delexicalized intensifier in English as it has the least lexical content of all English intensifiers. In the context of intensification, grammaticalization and delexicalization are essentially the same process, or in other words, delexicalization reflects grammaticalization in the intensification system.

The delexicalization of *very* refers to *very* losing its lexical meaning of "genuine/true" and only having an intensifying effect. This process has been described by Mustanoja (1960) with the help of the following examples (cited in Tagliamonte 2008, 363).

(a) Grant me confort this day, As thow art God *verray*!
(c.1470, Gol. & Gaw 957; OED very a., adv. n.1 A.I.1.a)

(b) He was a *verray* parfit gentil knyght.
(Chaucer, Canterbury Tales, A Prol.72)

(c) I was a *very* interested and anxious spectator.
(1782, R. Cumberland, Anecd. Painters (1787) II. 90; OED very a., adv. n.1 B.2.c)

(d) He was sike...and was *verray* contrite and sorwful in his herte.
(Trev. Higd. VI 93; cited in Mustanoja 1960: 326)

Example (a) shows the adjective meaning of ”genuine / true” (Tagliamonte 2008, 363). Example (b) shows the next phase of delexicalization as *very* was used in coordinate constructions with a following attributive adjective (ibid.). Example (c) shows *very* being used to convey simple intensification firstly with attributive adjectives and later also with predicative adjectives, as shown in example (d) (ibid.). By the last phase, Tagliamonte remarks (ibid.) that the lexical meaning of ”genuine / true” is no longer present. Following this cline of development, one might deduce that those intensifiers that occur more with predicative adjectives or have equal numbers between attributive and predicative uses might reflect a later stage in the delexicalization process and the intensifier's development (Tagliamonte 2008, 373).

As *very* has lost its lexical meaning, it is possible for *very* to have a very wide range of collocating adjectives. Partington (1993, 183) goes as far as stating that width of collocation and delexicalization are likely to be the same phenomenon. Indeed, the final stage of the delexicalization process is described by Tagliamonte in the same fashion (figure 2 below). Tagliamonte (2008, 372) observes that the delexicalization of a given word is a process that does not happen abruptly by chance, but instead through certain steps. These steps include metonymic or metaphoric extension from the original meaning, followed by the intensifier being used with a restricted set of adjectives and lastly, the intensifier is diffused to a larger set of adjectives of different types (ibid.). This process can be illustrated by the following figure adapted from Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005, 285).

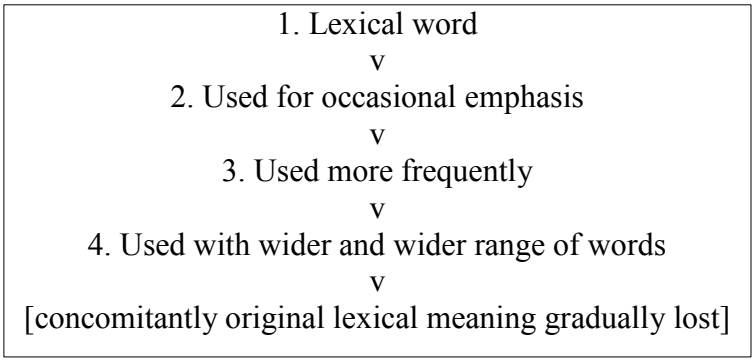


Figure2. Delexicalization process.

Based on her studies and other previous works, Tagliamonte states (2008, 380) that intensifiers diffuse first, and only after the diffusion to collocating with a large number of adjectives, the numbers of usage surge, and similarly, when the use of an intensifier recedes, it happens across all contexts of usage. One further example of delexicalization and width of collocation are adverbs that originate from negatively valued adjectives and occur with positively evaluated adjectives. Tagliamonte argues (2008, 375) that if adverbs such as *awfully* and *terribly* are occurring with adjectives such as *good*, *nice* and *glad*, this can be taken as evidence for being further in the delexicalization process, because of the contradictory lexical meanings occurring as collocates. This seems a legitimate deduction as those adverbs must have lost most of their lexical meaning, because if they still retained the lexical meaning, these combinations would sound utterly strange. Alongside with collocational patterns, gender of the speaker can also be taken as evidence for delexicalization. Tagliamonte and Roberts comment (2005, 294-295) that females use the incoming forms more, but as the process continues, the effect of gender lessens and in the later stages the effect of gender in delexicalization neutralizes.

Tagliamonte (2008, 385) found that in CanE spoken in Toronto, *very*, *really*, *so* and *pretty* represent different degrees of grammaticalization based on their use in predicative or attributive position, types of collocating adjectives and distribution by speaker age and gender. Tagliamonte contemplates (2008, 388) whether *really* has become the second fully delexicalized adjective intensifier, as it is widely diffused and frequently used in the speech community in Toronto. According to Tagliamonte (2008, 386), advanced delexicalization of intensifiers is manifested by (i) predicative adjectives and (ii) diffusion across adjectives.

Tagliamonte suggests (2008, 391) that the cycle of intensifiers' life follows a general pattern in which overuse, diffused use and long-time use work against the form, to make way for a mandatory development or recycling to recapture the boosting effect. Indeed, recycling or cycling of intensifiers is described as the continuous waxing and waning of forms over time to retain the intensifying effect of an intensifier (Tagliamonte and Denis 2014, 111-112). So, in essence, the trends of intensifier choice vary and some forms are lingering to resurface again after a period (ibid.). Stoffel comments

(1901, 2) that this process is constant, in other words new expressions are always needed, because the old expressions are deemed inadequate to represent the very highest degree. As time passes, even those intensifiers that etymologically have meant completeness, now mean only a high degree as overuse lessens their effectiveness (ibid.).

Recycling can also be described as a process in which a formerly popular intensifier, since forgotten, enters the language again. According to Tagliamonte (2008, 391) this process is apparent with the intensifier *so*, as it was first attested some 200 years ago and then reported as an incoming form and mostly used by women in the early 1900s by Stoffel, and in recent years its use has peaked in North American data (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005 and Tagliamonte 2008). Recycling of intensifiers might be a reflection of delexicalization in a sense, because some intensifiers fade away not fully delexicalized and resurface again, when the delexicalization process continues further (Tagliamonte 2008, 389-390). Delexicalization and recycling of forms reflect grammaticalization in the intensification system of English and are closely related to the historical developments and trends in intensifier use.

2.3.3 Renewal and layering

Linguistic renewal refers to the process in which "existing meanings may take on new forms" (Hopper and Traugott 2003, 122). Essentially this means e.g. that new intensifiers are employed for an existing meaning, and actually, Hopper and Traugott (ibid.) mention that intensifiers are a very favorable context for renewal, because intensifiers have an emotional function that is clearly conveyed by their use. Renewal also reflects people's will to be original and to not use older or out of date intensifiers, because that would result in their speech not being trendy. This process is apparent in Macaulay's Glasgow data (2006, 277); Macaulay found that adolescents have begun using the form *pure* as an intensifier, and moreover, the forms *really* and *very*, which are most common in the speech of many individuals, were not favored by Glasgow adolescents. Furthermore, Tagliamonte reports that

differences between gender and age groups are intimately tied to renewal of intensifiers in the community (2008, 385).

Layering of intensifiers refers to the intensification system having many ”layers” of intensifiers, in other words, that numerous intensifiers have been added to the system in different eras. As Ito and Tagliamonte show (2003, 266), some intensifiers have been around since Old English (e.g. *so*) and some added into the system in Middle English (e.g. *right*). Others may have been added in recent years, (e.g. adjective to intensifier through [-ly] suffixation), but all of these are used to convey roughly the same meaning or *function* of intensification. Layering is conceptualized by Hopper (1991, 22) as one of the five principles of grammaticalization: ”Within a broad functional domain, new layers are continually emerging. As this happens, the older layers are not necessarily discarded, but may remain to coexist with and interact with the newer layers.” Ito and Tagliamonte (2003, 267) reported that the layering of older and relatively new forms is a community-wide phenomenon as it takes place in all age groups (ibid.). This is to say that e.g. all age groups used the intensifier *bloody* as well as newer forms. In fact, Ito and Tagliamonte (2003, 277) propose that ”old intensifiers do not fade away; they stick around for a very long time”. Moreover, Ito and Tagliamonte report that intensifiers are an especially suitable site to analyze layering of forms in synchronic data (ibid.).

2.4 Earlier Research

In this section of the thesis, I will present the results of relevant previously conducted studies on intensifiers. Firstly, I will introduce some general patterns of intensifier use and frequencies of commonest intensifiers. Secondly, the age of the speaker and its influence on intensifier use is discussed and thirdly, the gender of the speaker and its influence on intensifier use is demonstrated.

2.4.1 Patterns of intensifier use in previous studies

Barnfield and Buchstaller studied the use of intensifiers in Tyneside in three corpora that gave them good material for a longitudinal study. They had multiple striking results in this study. Firstly, Barnfield and Buchstaller noticed that the use of *very* was overpowering in the 1960s as it had a 65% portion of the variable context, but in the 1990s it had given way to *really* (25.1%) and *dead* (35.9%) retaining only 18% of the variable context (2010, 267). Secondly, as can be deduced from the mentioned percentages, the rise of *really* is evident in the data from the 1990s as well as 2007/8. The use of *really* had risen from 8.6% in the 1960s to 25.1% in the 1990s and slightly to 26.7% in 2007/8 (ibid. 267, 270). Thirdly, the sudden rise and fall pattern of *dead* was equally peculiar: *dead* was non-existent as an intensifier in the data from the 1960s, had become the most common intensifier in the 1990s, but had declined to less than 10% of the variable context by 2007/8 (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010, 273). Lastly, Barnfield and Buchstaller maintain (2010, 270) that by 2007/8, there were a host of other intensifiers that had been non-existent or very infrequent previously, but had appeared in the 2007/8 data. This could mean that the number of intensifiers is increasing in English, because of the possibility of adding new suffixed intensifiers in the language (see section, 2.3.1).

Sali Tagliamonte is one of the scholars who have done plenty of research in recent years on intensifiers. Ito and Tagliamonte (2003, 266) examined the use of intensifiers occurring with adjectival heads, as the majority of intensifiers are used with adjectival heads. Indeed, already in 1973, Bäcklund found that circa 72% of intensifiers occur in this position (1973, 279). The most common intensifiers used in the York data were *very* (38.3%), *really* (30.2%) and *so* (10.1%).

Two years later in 2005, Tagliamonte and Roberts examined the use of intensifiers in ten seasons of *Friends*, one of the most popular television comedies of all time. In this television data of American English, Tagliamonte and Roberts found that most commonly used intensifiers were *so* (44.1%), *really* (24.6%) and *very* (14.2%) (2005, 287). These results are somewhat different as compared to the York data. The three commonest intensifiers are the same in both data sets, but the rankings are quite different as *very* and *so* change places in the rankings between the two data sets. Tagliamonte

(2008, 368) has also looked into the use of intensifiers in CanE and found that the four most commonly used intensifiers in the adjective premodifying position were *really*, *very*, *so* and *pretty*. *Really* was the most common with 1282 hits, followed quite equally by *very* (651), *so* (599) and *pretty* (497) respectively (ibid.).

Bauer and Bauer studied the use of intensifiers in New Zealand English both in predicative as well as attributive positions in a data of school children aged eleven or twelve. They found, that in predicative position, young New Zealanders use the intensifiers *as* and *so* most often to modify adjectives (2002, 248-249). The *as* construction is predominantly used with the adjective sweet (*sweet as*) (ibid.). Out of the two, *so* had a vast number of collocates in the data and *as* was more restricted (ibid.). These two intensifiers were followed by *really* and *real* in line of popularity in the predicative position (Bauer and Bauer 2002, 249). What is striking is that *very* seems to be an infrequent intensifier in the youngster data and appearing mostly with adjectives that have negative connotations (ibid. 250). Bauer and Bauer report that in the attributive position, *really* was the most frequent intensifier, followed by *as* and *real* (2002, 251). Again, the case with *very* is striking as there were no examples of *very* in the attributive position in the data (Bauer and Bauer 2002, 252).

When comparing these results with adult corpus data (WCSNZE), Bauer and Bauer found (2002, 255) that most commonly used intensifiers by New Zealander adults were *really*, *very* and *so*. Furthermore, the *as* construction had only 8 hits in the data altogether (ibid.). There was quite a difference in the use of intensifiers between children and adults as *very* was infrequent or non-existent in the use of children, but was the second most popular intensifier in adult use. The difference with the *as* construction is as striking, because it is one of the commonest in children's use, but only had 8 hits in the adult data. It has to borne in mind though, that these data sets are quite different in their composition and were collected in different times so the comparisons are merely hints to a direction, not absolute facts. Nonetheless, these findings are interesting and might have something to them.

The use of *so* in the Friends data is consistent with the pattern of a new intensifier in the system as it is favored with commonly used adjectives, in other words it has fewer collocates (2005, 292).

Quite interestingly, *so* has a correlation with the show's ratings: when *so* was used the most, *Friends* had better ratings than otherwise (2005, 297). This is at least an example of a link between popular culture and language, but can also be taken as an indication that more intensifiers used in the series lead to a more attention-capturing show, and hence the good ratings, but this is mere speculation on Tagliamonte and Roberts' part (ibid.).

2.4.2 Age of the speaker in earlier studies

Ito and Tagliamonte found in their study of York English that the frequency of intensification gradually increases from the oldest (66+) to the youngest age group (17-34) (2003, 264). What is more exciting is that they found a generation gap in York English: preferring *very* as an intensifier meant that you were over 35, whereas the use of *really* meant that you are under 35 years of age (2003, 277). Murphy obtained converging results in her study of Irish English spoken by women, indeed, the 20s age group were using *really* at a frequency of 1923 per million words, the 40s group only 483 per million words and the 70s/80s groups the least with a frequency of 271 (2010, 116). The pattern observed also holds for *very*, as the youngest 20s group had a substantially lower frequency (961) than the two older age groups, 40s (4347) and 70s/80s (2658) (Murphy 2010, 116).

According to Murphy (2010, 120), the 20s group might be preferring to use *really* over *very* to distance themselves from older age groups as being more fashionable, so in essence, to mark in-group membership. Furthermore, its use might also reflect American popular culture and television programs in which *really* is quite common (cf. Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005) (ibid.). The case with *so* is interesting in Murphy's data. There seems to be a pattern for both sexes in its use as it is most frequent in the 20s group, falling in use in the 40s group, but again more common for the oldest 70s/80s groups (Murphy 2010, 132). This is a representation of the constant change processes at work in the intensification system. One respondent describes the use of *so* by others than the young as "fake and annoying" or as trying to act younger than the person is (ibid. 126). All in all, Murphy observes

(2010, 118) that there is a slight increase in the use of intensifiers from the 20s to the 40s group, but a considerable decrease to the 70s/80s group.

Tagliamonte obtained converging result to her previous studies in 2008 in the Toronto data: *very* is the most common intensifier in the over 50-year-old category, and contrastively, *really* and *so* increased from the older to the younger speakers (2008, 372). Tagliamonte reports that younger men and women choose different intensifiers and that there is a gender difference in the use of *very* for the oldest generation (2008, 385).

Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010, 264) discovered that there were no statistically significant differences in intensifier choice in the 1960s data between age groups as *very* was the most frequent in both age groups. This is somewhat unexpected compared to other studies and general sociolinguistic theory as it is thought that the young have their own speech that differs from the older. The possible reason offered by Barnfield and Buchstaller for the similarity of intensifier patterns between age groups is that young adults did not have a transitional period between childhood and adulthood in the 1960s, but instead were taking adult responsibilities at a very young age, e.g. the average age of first marriage for women was 22 (2010, 264-265).

2.4.3 Gender of the speaker in earlier studies

As regards gender in the York data, Ito and Tagliamonte found that women lead the change to *really* in the middle-aged generation (35-65), but they could not generalize these results to all age groups, because in the youngest age group, the educated males were using as much *really* as the women were (2003, 275-276).

Tagliamonte and Roberts found that the female characters in *Friends* use twice as much *so* as the male characters, the female characters also use more *really* than the males, but both use *very* as much (2005, 289). Based on the Friends data, Tagliamonte and Roberts conclude that women's preference for *so* reflects the emotional language that women are more prone to using than men (2005, 289). But

on the other hand, Ito and Tagliamonte reported in 2003 that the gender difference is not as straightforward as has been previously reported as reflecting women's preference for hyperbole and speculate that their results could actually reflect more equal roles of men and women in today's society or changing stylistic choices in the community (2003, 277).

Murphy studied the use of intensifiers in Irish English and found (2010, 133) that women tend to use intensifiers far more often than the men. This is true for the whole corpora, but can also be seen comparing single intensifiers, e.g. *really* is used less frequently in the male adult corpus than in the female adult corpus. There were also differences in the choice of intensifier between men and women as the three commonest in women's speech were *very*, *really* and *so* leaving out the expletive in second place (Murphy 2010, 115). Contrastively, the men use the forms *very*, *so*, *fairly*, *right* and *really*, leaving out the expletive in first place (ibid. 131).

3. Data and methods

In this chapter, I will provide relevant background information for the ICE-corpora used as well as the methodology for the thesis. Firstly, I will introduce the corpora, ICE-NZ and ICE-CAN, that I will use as the data for my thesis. The data section is followed by an introduction of corpus linguistics and comparative sociolinguistics. Next, I will discuss the corpus design of ICE-corpora and the representativeness of the data. Lastly, I will introduce the extra-linguistic variables, age and gender, studied in this thesis, as well as circumscribe the variable context analyzed in my thesis.

3.1 The International Corpora of English

The first considerations to build an International Corpus of English were originally articulated in the mid-to-late 1980s, and as the project became more and more current with new theories of World Englishes, it proceeded to the design and compilation phase in the early 1990s. The goal was to build a corpus for each variety of English along the same lines in order to have a corpus that would provide material for comparative studies on the varieties of English (Greenbaum 1990, 80). As the theory of World Englishes had been a popular subject in linguistics, there was a need for applicable material, thus, the ICE-corpora also provided material for studies of English as an international language (Greenbaum 1991a, 7). All of the ICE-corpora are built in the same fashion; the number of words in the written part is circa 400.000 and in the spoken part circa 600.000. The different types of passages in the spoken section include e.g. direct conversations, broadcast interviews, spontaneous commentaries and legal presentations (see table 2 below). The ICE-corpora are especially suitable for a sociolinguistic study, as many social variables are readily available in the data manual (Greenbaum 1991b, 89), including the variables age and gender studied in this thesis.

Other things affecting the comparability of the ICE-corpora are that the texts or recorded spoken passages were gathered during a period of a couple of years in the early to mid-1990s for each variety and that each of these samples are roughly the same size of 2.000 words (Greenbaum 1991b, 86-87).

The design of the corpus is also quite versatile as each of the similarly built ICE-corpora are divided into many different categories to enable comparative analyses. These categories are: *written* / *spoken*, *private* / *public*, *monologue* / *dialogue*, *scripted* / *unscripted* and *printed* / *non-printed* (Greenbaum 1991b, 90). One of the selected research tasks is to examine the use of intensifiers in scripted and in non-scripted subsections of the corpora to see whether this has an impact on the frequency of intensifiers used. Hence, I will also be looking into one part of the corpora more closely.

Category	Text Category	Codes
DIALOGUE (180)		S1
Private (100)	Direct conversations (90)	S1A001 to S1A090
	Distance conversations (10)	S1A091 to S1A100
Public (80)	Class lessons (20)	S1B001 to S1B020
	Broadcast discussions (20)	S1B021 to S1B040
	Broadcast interviews (10)	S1B041 to S1B050
	Parliamentary debates (10)	S1B051 to S1B060
	Legal cross-examination (10)	S1B061 to S1B070
	Business transactions (10)	S1B071 to S1B080
MONOLOGUE (120)		S2
Unscripted (70)	Spontaneous commentaries (20)	S2A001 to S2A020
	Unscripted speeches (30)	S2A021 to S2A050
	Demonstrations (10)	S2A051 to S2A060
	Legal presentations (10)	S2A061 to S2A070
Scripted (50)	Broadcast news (20)	S2B001 to S2B020
	Broadcast talks (20)	S2B021 to S2B040
	Speeches (not broadcast) (10)	S2B041 to S2B050

Table 2. Spoken-ICE categories and codes.

Even though the ICE-corpora are built in a versatile and apt manner for comparative studies, it has to be noted that the corpora are limited in their size and it may be that some of the results obtained are influenced by this fact and hence are not totally representative. This can be a factor in studying some of the smaller sections of the corpora, social variables and linguistic variables that are rare.

ICE-NZ and ICE-CAN are both stratified by age and gender of the participants. All in all, there are hundreds of speakers in both corpora, whose age range from the youngest adolescence group (16 to 19) to old age (85 to 89). For this thesis, I have decided to divide the speakers into four age groups based on the emic approach that follows groupings based on shared experiences rather than arbitrary age cohorts by decade or other equal time span. The first group is ”adolescence” for speakers aged 16 to 24, followed by the young adult group formed by 25- to 39-year-olds. The two groups left are formed by the middle-aged (40 to 59 years of age) and the older (60+ years of age).

3.2 Corpus linguistics and comparative sociolinguistics

This thesis is a study in corpus linguistics as I want to study the use of intensifiers in two corpora of spoken language and hence make observations of spoken language based on the given corpora. Sampson and McCarthy (2005, 1) state that a corpus is a “fair sample of the language as a whole or of some linguistic genre, and hence a useful source of evidence for research on the language” and continue that corpus linguistics is a branch of research that “makes crucial use of language corpora”. There are no good or bad corpora in general, but instead, they must be analyzed based on their representativeness discussed in section 3.3.

Corpus linguistics has been applied for the study of language for over a century, well before the invention of computers, but today, modern corpus linguistics is heavily dependent on the computer, which has made the study more accurate as it is possible to search for *all* instances of a given structure of interest (Sampson and McCarthy 2005,1). As many, electronic copies of a given corpus are available, it is possible to use the corpus in many places at once. This is an advantage compared to the early corpora that were only available in print in a given location (ibid.).

The field of study that compares different varieties of English is called comparative sociolinguistics and in this method the varieties are compared with each other by the results of a statistical analysis (Tagliamonte and Denis 2014, 96). One example of the methods used in

comparative sociolinguistics is distributional analysis that e.g. Tagliamonte has applied in her work (see for instance Ito & Tagliamonte 2003, Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005 and Tagliamonte 2008). Usually the comparative approach uses complex statistical measures such as statistical significance of variables in data analysis, but I will resort to a simplified statistical analysis of normalized frequency. In my opinion, the proportional quantities of intensifiers compared to others in the variable context are enough to make deductions on the use of intensifiers that is relevant for the study at hand.

3.3 Corpus design and representativeness of data

Biber (1992, 174) states that the design of a corpus can be evaluated based on the range of text types of a language it includes and, on the other hand, how well the corpus represents the range of linguistic distributions in a language. Biber concludes that the creation of a successful corpus is a cyclical process that builds on existing corpora, only then the corpus design and compilation of a new corpus can begin, followed by empirical investigation of data (1992, 195).

All of the ICE-corpora are designed in the same manner, which makes comparing them easy and fruitful. The corpus design gives more emphasis on dialogues over monologues, and additionally, private conversations, that are in a sense most representing of speech, represent one third of the corpora. All in all, the corpus design is representative of spoken language as the rarer categories are represented by smaller proportions and commoner samples have greater shares of the corpora. The corpora were collected in the early 1990s in all varieties of English that makes the corpora even more comparable. The process of ICE-corpora design as a whole is a good example of international co-operation as the scholars have been in close contact throughout the process via e-mail and in annual ICAME meetings (Greenbaum 1990, 80).

The concept of representativeness is pivotal to a corpus as it depicts the “extent to which a sample includes the full range of variability in a population” (Biber 1992, 174). It has to be borne in mind that spoken corpora often include scripted texts, e.g. speeches and as such are not totally

representative of spontaneous usage in conversations (Sinclair 1987, 80). Indeed, in order to achieve representativeness of a corpus (or a sample of a given language), Biber (1992, 174) maintains that the target population must be defined and then decisions made on the method of sampling. The ICE-corpora are quite a representative data to study the use of intensifiers as the spoken categories amount to some 600.000 words and intensifiers are quite common in spoken language, hence it is reasonable to assume that the corpora give accurate data for comparative purposes. The ICE-corpora are a collection of a range of spoken manuscripts and some texts are scripted, but this is not a big problem in the large scheme of things. It might instead provide interesting results for the use of intensifiers in scripted speech versus naturally occurring speech.

3.4 Extra-linguistic factors

One of the key choices for the methodological construction of this thesis was to examine the correlation of the extra-linguistic variables gender and age with intensifiers. These variables are presented in this section of the thesis. Chambers remarks (2003, 18) that ”correlating linguistic variation as the dependent variable with independent variables such as linguistic environment, style or social categories is the primary empirical task of sociolinguistics.” Hence, sociolinguistic study is always interested in the effect of extra-linguistic variables in language and the quantitative approach is especially focused on the speech community (Milroy and Milroy 1997, 50). In essence, this approach looks into the interplay of social and linguistic variables in a given community to make deductions on language usage, as well as variation and change, in different social groupings in this speech community (ibid. 50-51). It has to be borne in mind that the approach does not make deductions on the language as a whole, but instead focuses on speech communities and possibly at a later stage the analysis is widened to a larger population (ibid. 50-51).

Some of the extra-linguistic factors that are studied in the area of quantitative sociolinguistics are social class, age of the speaker and sex or gender of the speaker (Milroy and Milroy 1997, 54). I have

chosen speaker age and gender as the extra-linguistic variables studied in my thesis as this information is easily accessible in my data, and additionally, it has been suggested in previous studies on intensifiers that there is fluctuation in the use of intensifiers that correlates with speaker age and gender. This section provides a short account of both extra-linguistic variables.

3.4.1 Sex of the speaker

On the one hand, sex of the speaker has been characterized as a ”mathematically simplex variable” (Milroy and Milroy 1997, 54) but on the other, the differentiation between sex and gender in the study of language has to be considered (Wodak and Benke 1997, 128). Wodak and Benke continue: ”It makes no sense therefore to assume that there is just one set of traits that characterize men in general and thus define masculinity; or likewise, that there is one set of traits for women, which define femininity” (1997, 129). As Wodak and Benke's citation suggests, I cannot argue that the gender of the speakers would be the same as the biological sex of the speaker, even though the majority of people have corresponding biological sex and social gender.

The ICE-data were collected in the early 1990s, so I cannot actually make any new deductions on the psychological, social and cultural characteristics or *gender* of the speaker, hence, I will only be focusing on the correlations of biological sex and the use of intensifiers. In this context, I want to note that the ICE-corpora use the term gender to account for biological sex, which needs to be taken into account when reading this thesis as the terminologies differ in this respect. All in all, the sex / gender dichotomy is a difficult concept to tackle as the things that define one's gender are the things that make a difference in the choice of intensifier, but the biological sex does not. The problem in my data is that I would have to equate sex and gender and doing that is not justified.

William Labov (1990, 206) has suggested that in a situation of stable social stratification, women are more conservative in their language use and prefer forms with overt prestige whereas men are the opposite as they prefer covert prestige (Principle I). But on the other hand, Labov maintains (ibid.),

that in situations of unstable social stratification, ”women use a higher frequency of the incoming forms than men” (Principle II). Labov argues (1990, 214) that women are more expressive in their behavior, which is also reflected in their language and the use of expressive symbols. The use of these expressive symbols might be further interpreted as strengthening the position of women in the society as women rely more on symbolic power, because they have less material power compared to men (ibid.).

Trudgill states (1972, 182) that women want to secure and signal their position linguistically, because their position in the society is less secured compared with men. Trudgill also comments (1972, 183), that in our society, men are rated socially by what they *do*, whereas women are rated more based on how they *appear* and language has a big impact on how a person appears. Furthermore, James Milroy comments that women's language has more linguistic freedom as it is handled more tolerantly in the local peer-groups (1981, 37).

The comments made by Labov, Trudgill and Milroy have met some feminist critique, as for instance the methods used give lower scores to women than men (Chambers 2003, 145). This methodology treats men as the norm and women as a deviation from that norm. This is quite contrary to the results of numerous studies that show women's superiority in many aspects of language use over men (ibid. 148). Chambers maintains (2003, 147) that sociolinguistic ability is one additional aspect of language in which women are better than men.

As regards intensification, the mentioned theories would suggest that women use more intensifiers as it would make them appear more secure socially and could also be taken as reflecting more linguistic freedom. Historically, some intensifiers have been thought to be purely feminine such as *so* and women are credited with using more intensifiers because of fondness for hyperbole (Stoffel 1901, 101 and Jespersen 1922, 250). Indeed, the gender of a speaker has been demonstrated to affect the usage of intensifiers in previous studies as outlined in section 2.4.3 (see for instance Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005 and Murphy 2010).

3.4.2 Age of the speaker

Like gender, the age of speaker can be taken as a mathematically simplex variable, but is it the most fruitful way of looking at it? This question has been addressed by two categorizations of age or how to divide the cohorts. Dividing the cohorts etically means that the age groups are chosen arbitrarily, e.g. as one decade or other equal age spans, whereas the emic approach takes the developmental stages and shared experiences into account, e.g. childhood or adolescence (Eckert 1997, 155). In this thesis, I will have the emic approach and I will divide the cohorts based on shared experiences and developmental stages. I base this division on Eckert's statement on sociolinguistic factors (1997, 167):

> ”Because of the complexity of the social factors to which it corresponds, chronological age, like other major social variables such as social class and gender, is only a rough indicator of a composite of heterogeneous factors. The challenge for sociolinguistics, particularly for the study of variation, is to tease apart these various – and sometimes conflicting – factors. This requires directing our focus away from chronological age and towards the life experiences that give age meaning.”

Childhood is obviously the most important developmental stage for language as most individuals acquire a language in early childhood, however, for the study of variation, adolescence is often referred to as the most interesting developmental stage. Adolescence is a stage in which ”fast change and construction of style – including linguistic style – becomes a crucial part of activity” (Eckert 1997, 163). Indeed, adolescents are very aware of their social groupings and surroundings, and language is one aspect by which an adolescent can indicate that he or she belongs in a group. This has to do with adolescents' will to be their own person and distance themselves from children and adults as their own group. Indeed, the peer-group is very important for adolescents and they interact with peers more than other age groups. One hypothesis that is important for the peer-group is the role of imitation in language change (Bright 1997, 85). This hypothesis postulates that as a change is initiated by one speaker, other speakers in the speech community will adopt it too through imitation (ibid.). This type of change is quite likely to happen in the adolescent peer-groups as the speakers are in such closely knit relationships. Chambers (2003, 194) describes adolescence as a time in which solidarity with peers and the separation of adults sums up as ”the focal point for linguistic innovation

and change". The developmental stages or life tasks for adolescents include acquiring an education, finding work and partner.

Young adulthood is characterized by more responsibility over the life course as young adults get married, possibly start a family and find more permanent occupations (Chambers 2003, 194). If the language of adolescence is formed in the peer-group, then for young adults, the most important locale for language would be the workplace. The workplace also has an impact on the standardization of language, that is said to increase in young adulthood, especially for young adults that work in language-sensitive occupations (Chambers 2003, 171). As opposed to being responsible for themselves, young adults may be responsible for other individuals too, which might also have a standardizing effect on their language.

The most important developmental stages and life tasks are usually achieved by middle-age, which is a life stage characterized by working, possibly providing for the family and taking care of the elderly. Chambers (2003, 166) states that stereotypically, as people get older, they become more conservative. This could also be taken as an indication of their language generally being more conservative and lacking linguistic innovation and change. A similar comment is also made by Eckert (1997, 164) who maintains that this conservatism has to do with pressure of using standard language in the workplace. The treatment of age as a sociolinguistic variable has also been characterized as having a middle-aged bias (Eckert 1997, 157). In this perspective, middle-age is treated as the norm and lacking development, whereas other life stages are reflected to this norm as deviations from it (ibid.). Additionally, adulthood is sometimes treated as a homogeneous age mass (Eckert 1997, 165). If this is the case, the differences between young adults, the middle aged and the elderly are not considered, which is quite different from childhood or adolescence studies that might have year-by-year comparisons (ibid.).

Older people usually retain much of the features in their language that have been acquired in earlier life course and feel that their language is sufficient, and hence, will not adopt new expressions consciously (Chambers 2003, 203). For intensification, these theories would suggest that younger

speakers are more innovative and use more intensifiers, whereas older people would be more conservative and use less intensifiers that *intensify* a statement, as the label suggests. Based on the theories, accordingly, young adults and the middle-aged should be situated between these extremes.

3.5 Circumscribing the variable

Ito and Tagliamonte circumscribe the variable context that they study as all adjectives that could be intensified (2003, 263). This means that in order to have only the intensifiable adjectives left, Ito and Tagliamonte had to leave out adjective constructions that refer to KIND rather than DEGREE, comparatives and superlatives, as well as negative contexts, because they do not denote a higher degree (2003, 263-264). With the help of these measures, Ito and Tagliamonte are able to state the percentages for adjectives that were intensified as well as the percentages for each individual intensifier.

As this process is quite laborious and large-scale for a Master's Thesis, I resorted to a simplified analysis of adjectival heads. I did not analyze and sort through each adjective in the data, but instead, I analyzed eleven most common intensifiers in the adjective premodifying position based on previous research (e.g. Ito & Tagliamonte 2003, Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005, Tagliamonte 2008, Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010).

absolutely completely totally entirely extremely really real very pretty bloody so

Figure 3. Intensifiers studied.

As the ICE-corpora are tagged, I was able to get a set of concordance lists fairly easily by doing the searches using Wordsmith Tools 6.0, but I still had to go through each line of data in order to be sure of the correctness of data and suitability for the purposes of this thesis. The use of WordSmith also made it possible to search for only those contexts that I wanted to study by using selected grammatical tags (such as very_RG *_JJ, which translates into: *very*, degree adverb, followed by any adjective). This automatically left out many contexts that were not applicable such as adjectives that

refer to KIND rather than DEGREE. The following examples represent uses that were left out of this thesis based on the method introduced by Ito and Tagliamonte.

1. Very frequently it is *not a very* large leap. <ICE-CAN S2B-028 #87:1:A>
2. We used the *very best* consultants in the world. <ICE-NZ:S1B-030#102:1:A>

The first example was left out as it is a negative clause that by definition does not denote a higher degree and the second example was left out because it is a superlative construction. There are some other examples too, that had to be left out from the data, because they did not have an intensifying effect when the deep meaning was considered, even though they might look like an intensifier. Basically this meant modal meanings of *really* (3) with the provided concordance threads and adverbial uses of intensifiers (4) that were also discarded from the data. Types of cases like example five were left out, because of the discourse marker function of *so* rather than intensification.

3. it's really a big job and I'm *really tired* of it <ICE-CAN S1A-036 #42:1:A>
4. they hit that thing *so hard* <ICE-CAN S1A-055 #36:1:B>
5. *so literally* she would pass out for several classes <ICE-CAN S1A-095 #100:1:A>

In order to examine the delexicalization of intensifiers, I will also conduct an analysis of attributive (6 and 7) and predicative (8 and 9) positions of the selected intensifiers.

6. You can actually do a *pretty* clean job scraping that glue off <ICE-CAN S1A-005 #93:1:A>
7. … chocolate chips you know those *really* small ones <ICE-NZ:S1A-064#245:1:F>
8. Anyway they looked *so* nice and a plane took off at the same time <ICE-NZ:S1A-019#270:1:B>
9. it's *very* hard to say no and it is *very* hard to plan <ICE-CAN S1B-077 #48:1:A>

Indeed, previous works have suggested that the use of an intensifier with predicative adjectives might reflect a higher degree of delexicalization (e.g. Ito and Tagliamonte 2003, 271). In fact, Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010, 274-275) suggest that based on their Tyneside data, the system of intensification is moving towards increasing predication. Contrary to Ito and Tagliamonte's findings, quite interestingly, Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010, 275-276) suggest that newer forms of intensifiers (for instance, *proper*, *canny*, *dead* and *so*) are preferred in predicative contexts whereas older forms appear more in attributive constructions.

4. Corpus data analysis

I began the data analysis by reading through each line in the concordance lists and deleted the contexts mentioned in section 3.5. As I want to correlate the use of intensifiers with sociolinguistic variables age and gender, and have a look at the differences between attributive and predicative uses, I manually added these variables in the concordance lists in a spreadsheet software. This turned out to be quite a laborious undertaking, but with that I had a finished data set from which to make deductions on.

After the data processing was complete, I moved on to conduct a distributional analysis. The distributional analysis was followed by an analysis on the extra-linguistic variables gender and age. Then, I analyzed the effect that the spoken category, scripted / unscripted, has on the use of intensifiers. Lastly, I conducted an analysis of the attributive and predicative uses of the selected intensifiers. These parts of the analysis form this chapter, and I will discuss each corpus in relation to previously conducted studies and theories in separate sub-sections. I will begin with ICE-CAN in section 4.1 and then move on to discuss the findings of ICE-NZ in section 4.2.

4.1 ICE-CAN

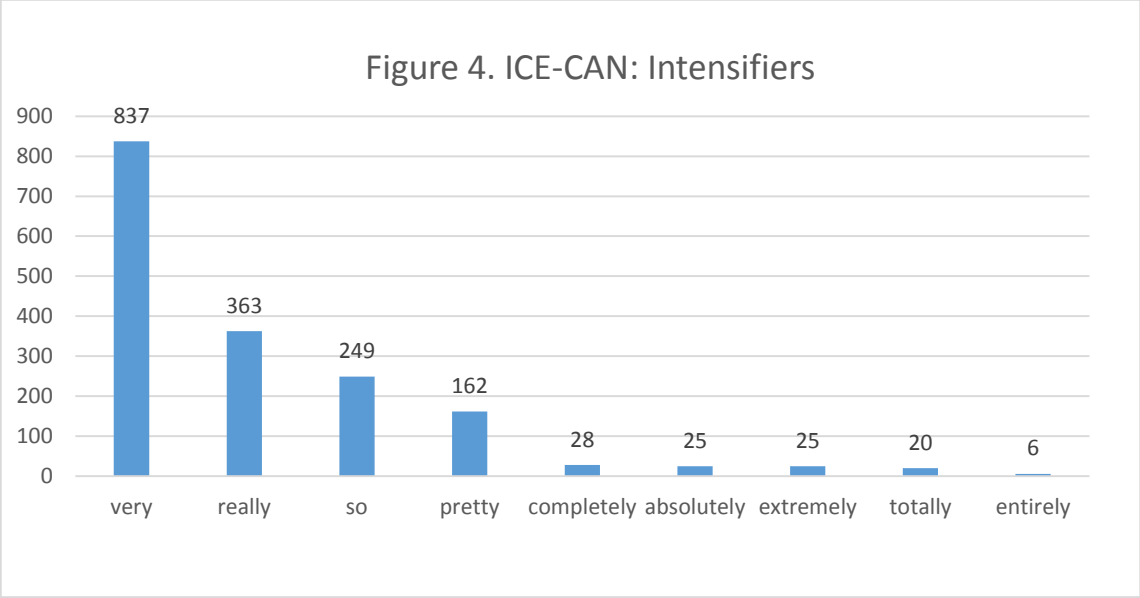
The number of words for the spoken section of ICE-CAN is 641.877 acquired by the WordList feature of WordSmith 6.0. I used this word count in calculating the normalized frequencies stated in the following section. Out of the 11 selected intensifiers, I found that 9 of them occurred in the adjective premodifying position in ICE-CAN, but there were no tokens of *bloody* or *real* in ICE-CAN.

4.1.1 Frequency of intensifiers

All in all, the initial searches of the selected intensifiers by grammatical tag in ICE-CAN resulted in 1810 tokens, but after deleting the unwanted contexts listed in section 3.5, I was left with 1715 tokens. Hence, the number of deleted tokens amounts to 95. Examples of each intensifier are given below in the order of frequency in ICE-CAN.

1. … northern Canada where southern food is *very* expensive and retail competition is <ICE-CAN S1B-060 #22:1:B>
2. Alice's things are *really* nice <ICE-CAN S1A-014 #45:1:B>
3. This past weekend was *so* beautiful <ICE-CAN S1A-064 #136:1:B>
4. That is a *pretty* good curling shot <ICE-CAN S2A-019 #117:1:A>
5. Madame speaker, this is a motion *completely* worthy of the non-partisan support <ICE-CAN S2B-027 #93:1B>
6. provincial economic policies can be *absolutely* disastrous <ICE-CAN S2B-022 #85:1:A>
7. It is, uh this is *extremely* funny <ICE-CAN S1A-035 #188:1:B>
8. which is *totally* unapologetic, *totally* unapologetic <ICE-CAN S1A-025 #123:1A>
9. Yeah, it is *entirely* possible I did <ICE-CAN S1A-029 #18:1:A>

Furthermore, the number of each of the selected intensifiers are listed in figure 4 below. This figure is quite illustrative as it describes the frequencies of each intensifier as opposed to other intensifiers in the data.



As can be seen in the figure, *very* is the most frequent intensifier in ICE-CAN with 837 tokens or 48.8% of the variable context. *Very* was followed by *really* in second place with 363 tokens or 21.1% of the variable context. The third most popular intensifier in ICE-CAN was *so* with 249 tokens or 14.5% of the variable context. *Pretty* was the fourth most common intensifier in ICE-CAN with 162 tokens that represent 9.4% of the variable context. Overall, the variable context in my study is dominated by these four intensifiers as their combined number amounts to 1611 tokens, which represents 93.9% of the variable context. It has to borne in mind though, that these intensifiers were

selected based on previously conducted studies and they do not represent the whole category of intensification, but nonetheless, they do represent the majority of all intensifiers. All intensifiers are listed in table 3 below, which shows the number of tokens, percentage of variable context and normalized frequency per 10.000 words.

Intensifier	Number of tokens	Percentage of variable context	Normalized frequency / 10.000 words
very	837	48.8%	13.039
really	363	21.1%	5.655
so	249	14.5%	3.879
pretty	162	9.4%	2.523
completely	28	1.6%	0.436
absolutely	25	1.5%	0.389
extremely	25	1.5%	0.389
totally	20	1.2%	0.311
entirely	6	0.3%	0.0934

Table 3. Chosen intensifiers in ICE-CAN.

These results seem to be conforming to previously conducted studies quite well. Indeed, Ito and Tagliamonte found (2003, 266) that the three commonest intensifiers in the adjective premodifying position in York English were *very* (38.3%), *really* (30.2%) and *so* (10.1%). This finding seems to be in line with my findings in ICE-CAN for the order of the intensifiers, but the percentages are different. In my data, the proportion of *very* is significantly larger than in Ito and Tagliamonte's York data. On the other hand, the combined percentages for *very* and *really* are virtually equal between the two data sets.

The four most frequent intensifiers *very*, *really*, *so* and *pretty* are listed as the most frequent intensifiers in CanE by Tagliamonte (2008, 368). It is not that big of a surprise that the most frequent intensifiers are the same, after all, Tagliamonte's study was conducted on CanE. But the order of the intensifiers seems to have changed, as Tagliamonte reports (ibid.) that *really* is most common with

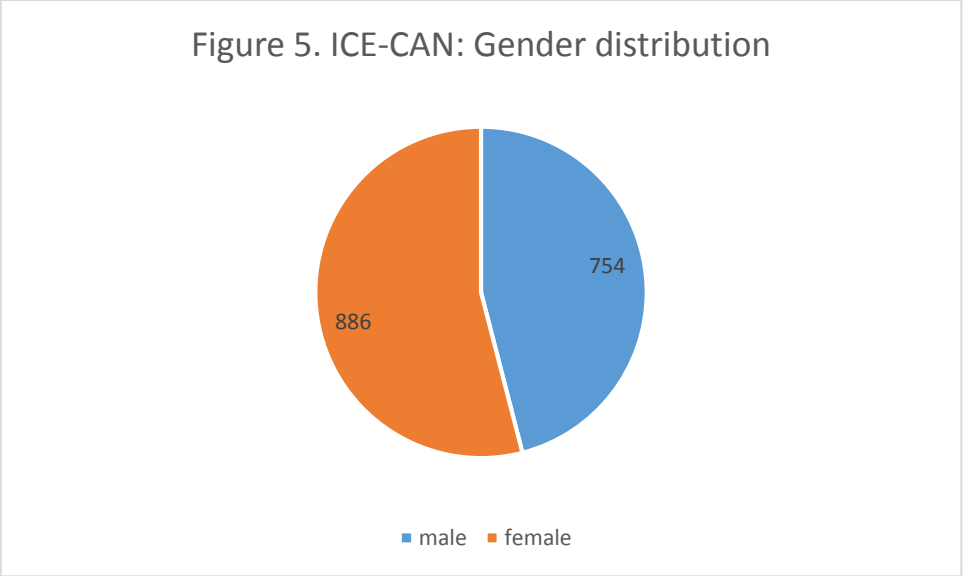
1282 tokens and *very* has declined to second place with only 651 tokens in Tagliamonte's data. *So* (599 tokens) and *pretty* (497 tokens) have retained their places in 2008 as the third and fourth most frequent intensifier in the adjective premodifying position and actually their numbers are quite close to the number of *very* (ibid.). This makes the use of *really* even more significant as it is followed by three quite equally popular intensifiers that each have no more than half of the tokens than *really*. *Really* stands out from Tagliamonte's data as the dominating intensifier of choice.

As the ICE-corpora were collected in the 1990s and Tagliamonte published her study in 2008, there seems to have been changes happening in the intensification system in Canada. This process seems to be the same as reported by Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010, 267) who found that *very* had given way to *really* and *dead* in their study of Tyneside English. Indeed, a change in the popularity of intensifiers seems to have happened from the collection of ICE-CAN in the 1990s to Tagliamonte's study in 2008 as *very* has given way to *really* as the most frequently used intensifier. These changes can be taken as an example of the waxing and waning of forms that happens in the intensification system as forms are cycled to retain the function of intensification. Tagliamonte suggested (2008, 391) that this is the general pattern that happens in the development of intensifiers as overuse and diffused use lessens the intensification function.

This could possibly mean that *very* has reached its turning point and is now declining as other intensifiers gain more popularity. This would mean that the first totally delexicalized intensifier is declining, which opens the way for *really*. Actually, Tagliamonte ponders whether *really* has become the second fully delexicalized adjective intensifier (2008, 388). This could mean that *really* is the most commonly used intensifier for some time and then declines in use to give way for the next upcoming intensifier.

4.1.2 Intensifiers and gender

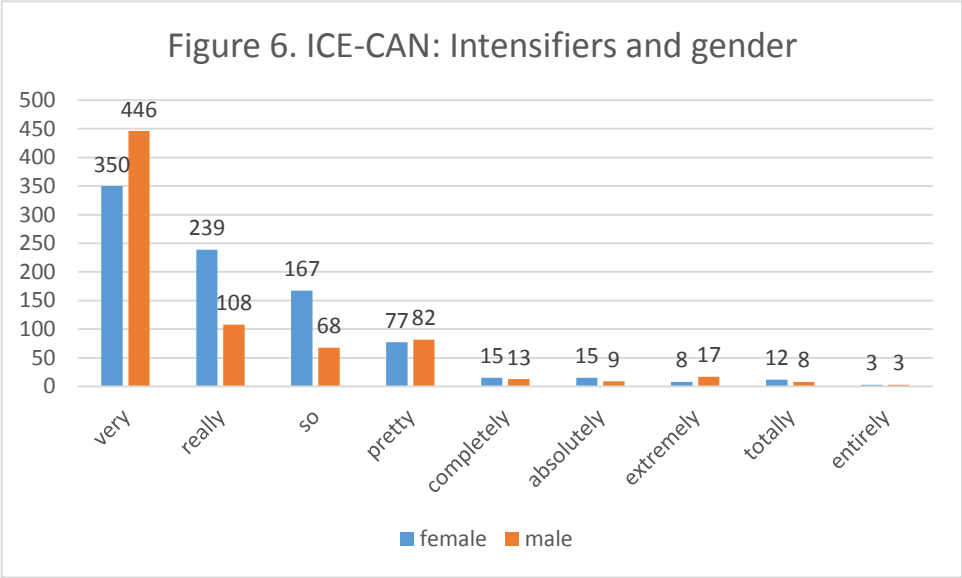
The effect that a speaker's gender has on the choice and frequency of intensifiers has been the topic of numerous studies in recent years. The gender distribution for intensifiers in the spoken section of ICE-CAN was affected by the fact that 75 tokens lacked gender specification, and naturally, these tokens were excluded from the total number of analyzed tokens for gender distribution in the spoken section of ICE-CAN. With this in mind, the total number of tokens was 1640 of which females represented 886 tokens and males 754 tokens. Hence, the percentages for gender distribution are 54,0% female and 46,0% male. So, in ICE-CAN, females use a bit more intensifiers and the proportions of each gender are illustrated in figure 5 below.



The fact that females use more intensifiers is not too surprising in light of the previously conducted studies of intensifiers. Actually, it would be expected that females use even more intensifiers as compared with males, as for instance Murphy has studied the subject and concluded that females use far more intensifiers than males in her data (2010, 133).

When having a look at the individual intensifiers and their gender distribution (figure 6), we notice that the females are using more of the intensifiers *really* and *so* in ICE-CAN. In fact, the proportions of tokens uttered by females are quite clearly larger than tokens uttered by males. There were 347 tokens of *really* that had gender specification, and out of these 239 tokens or 68.9% were

uttered by females and 108 tokens or 31.1% by males. Correspondingly, there were 235 tokens of *so* in the spoken section of ICE-CAN that had gender specification. Out of these 235 tokens, 167 or 71.1% were uttered by females and 69 tokens or 28.9% were uttered by males. These results are similar to Tagliamonte and Robert's finding in 2005 in the *Friends* data as they report (2005, 289) that female characters were using more *really* and *so* than the male characters. Tagliamonte and Roberts associate this propensity to use *so* and *really* with the more emotional language females are more inclined to using than males (ibid.). Murphy found (2010, 115) that the most common intensifiers in female's speech in Irish English were *very*, *really* and *so.* This seems to be the case in my data as well.



If the females lead in the use of *so* and *really*, the males seem to be leading in the use of *very* in ICE-CAN, which can be linked to the males being more conservative and not acquiring newer forms as easily as the females. This finding is contradictory to the findings of Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005, 289) who found that both genders were using approximately the same numbers of *very* in the *Friends* data. My findings are also contradictory to Murphy's findings as she found that the most commonly used intensifiers for males were *very*, *so*, *fairly*, *right* and *really* (2010, 131). The fact that *really* was only the fifth most common intensifier in Irish English for males is quite a difference to my data as *really* is the second most commonly used intensifier for males in my data. Murphy's data also had high numbers of intensifiers that were left out of the variable context in my study. In the

spoken section of ICE-CAN, *pretty* seems to be quite even in distribution, males with 82 tokens and females with 77 tokens.

The other five of the selected intensifiers are quite low in frequency, but there are some mentionable differences in their gender distribution. All of the nine intensifiers have a female and male representation in the data, and hence, there are no intensifiers that stood out of the others as clearly as that. Nonetheless, the intensifiers *absolutely*, *extremely* and *totally* seem to be tilted towards either of the genders more than the other. As the number of occurrences are quite low for each intensifier, these findings must be taken as tentative and not the absolute truth. Firstly, a*bsolutely* occurs 24 times in ICE-CAN with gender specification, out of which 15 (62.5%) are uttered by females and 9 (37.5%) by males. One token was undefined as regards gender. Secondly, *totally* occurs in the corpus 20 times of which 12 tokens (60%) are uttered by females and 8 tokens (40%) by males. Thirdly, *extremely* occurs 25 times in ICE-CAN and 17 tokens (68%) are uttered by males as opposed to 8 (32%) by females. Hence, it would seem that *absolutely* and *totally* are more common in the spoken language of females, whereas *extremely* is used more by males. In order to make conclusive deductions, the number of tokens would have to be significantly higher, though.

My findings that females use more intensifiers than males in ICE-CAN, can be linked to sociolinguistic theory of gender, as the language females use is said to be more expressive in nature (Labov 1990, 214). Intensifiers can be seen as expressive symbols that females rely on to gain symbolic power to match the material power males possess more (ibid.). Women are also said to have more linguistic freedom (Milroy 1981, 37) which makes the use of intensifiers more likely in a sense. Thirdly, females are said to be rated more on how they appear as opposed to males being rated by what they do (Trudgill 1972, 183). In this view, language has a big part in how a person appears and it could be stated that using intensifiers in their language, would make females appear more convincing. With these theories in mind, it would be expected that the females use even more intensifiers, so it could be said that these theories are not entirely tenable.

The fact that females use more of the intensifiers *really* and *so* can be linked to historical theory

of intensification as Stoffel (1901, 101) and Jespersen (1922, 250) maintain that some intensifiers (e.g. *so*) are thought to be purely feminine and reflecting female's fondness for hyperbole.

4.1.3 Intensifiers and age

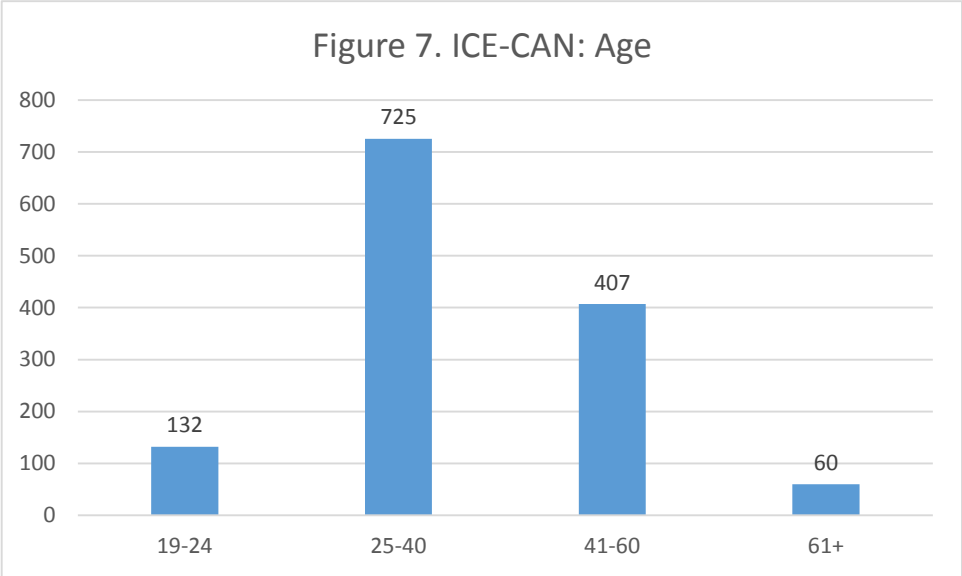
The frequency of using intensifiers has been correlated with age in previously conducted studies and as this information was available for parts of my data, I chose to study the correlations of age and the use of intensifiers. Unfortunately, age was left out of many spoken categories in ICE-CAN based on e.g. the confidentiality of witnesses of trials.

I divided the speakers of spoken ICE-CAN to four separate age-categories based on shared life-experiences or the emic approach. The first group was ”adolescence” or the 19 to 24-year-olds. The second category was ”young adulthood” formed by the 25 to 40-year-olds. The third group was labelled ”middle age” represented by the 41 to 60-year-olds. Lastly, the fourth group was labelled ”old age” represented by people who are 61 years of age or older. Figure 7 depicts the use of intensifiers by these four groups.

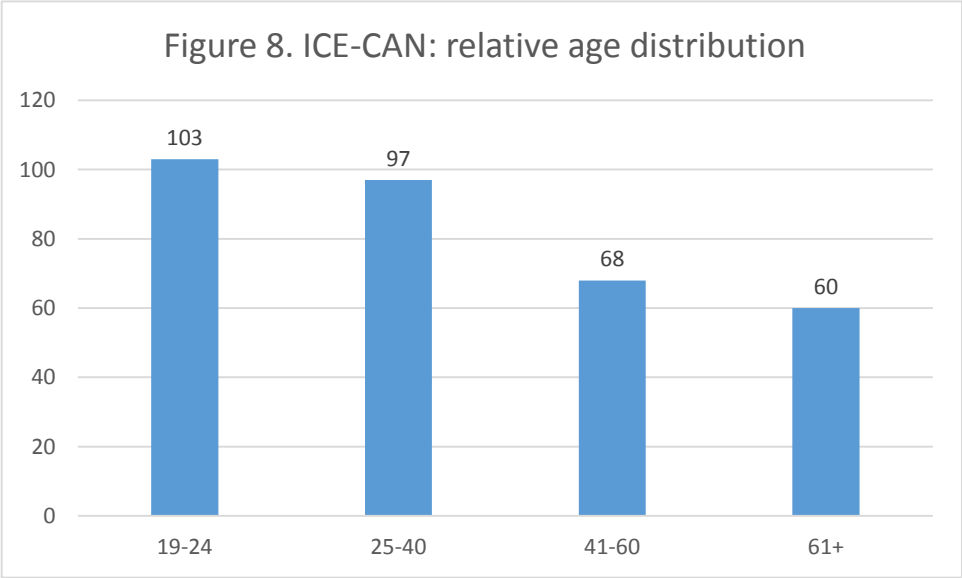
Some of the participants have taken part in multiple samples, but when I counted the participants as individual speakers not minding this fact, the number of speakers for the chosen age groups were 46 for the adolescence group, 268 for the young adult group, 216 for the middle age group and 36 for the old age group. The number of speakers that did not have age specification amounts to more than the combined number of the speakers in these age categories. The fact that the number of speakers are so different for these age groups will surely have an effect on the results of my study as they may skew the results in some direction and there is a larger possibility of anomalies that would not be present had the data been more equally collected in regard to the age criterion. It has to be borne in mind, though, that it is difficult to get participants to take part in a study, let alone to choose participants to achieve an equally distributed corpus on all criterions. Based on these remarks, I have to say that the objectives of representativeness and corpus design have not fully been met with ICE-

CAN.

As we can see in figure 7 below, the highest number of intensifiers is used by the ”young adult” group and the number of intensifiers declines from this group to the ”middle age” group and further to ”old age” group.



This is in line with previously conducted studies, but what is interesting is the low number of intensifiers used by the ”adolescence” group. I would say that this is a reflection of how the corpus is built as the adolescence group has only 46 speakers and I suspect that the adolescence group would have a significantly higher number of occurring intensifiers if the number of speakers would be equal to other age groups.



In fact, this is the case, when I used the lowest number of speakers (36) in the old age group to normalize the occurrences to make them comparable. When I normalized the numbers of intensifiers in other age groups with this in mind, the numbers of intensifiers were 103 for the adolescence group, 97 for the young adult group, 68 for the middle age group and 60 for the old age group (figure 8).

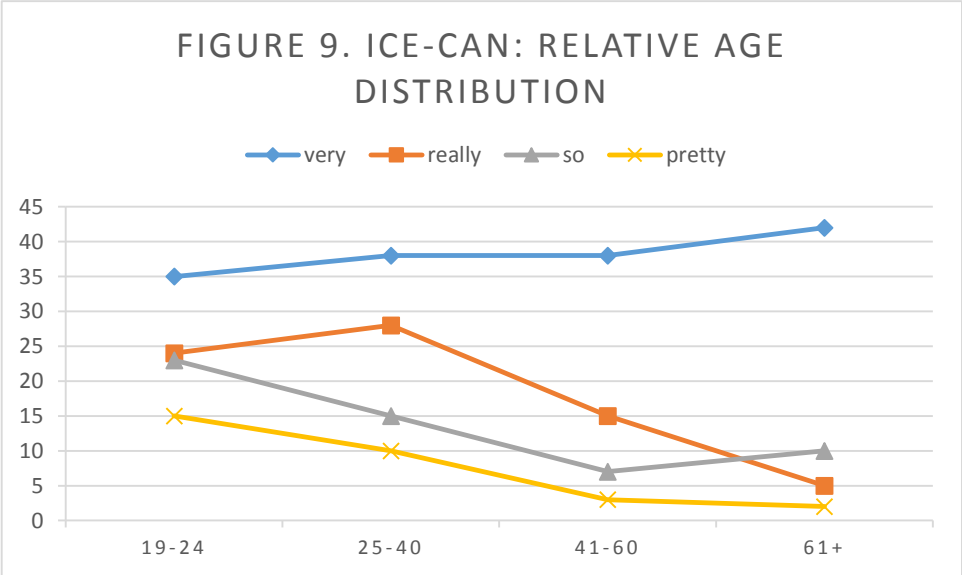
The results of the normalized frequencies for each age group depicted in figure 8 above conform to general sociolinguistic theories and earlier studies (e.g. Ito and Tagliamonte 2003, 264), as the number of intensifiers steadily declines as the age of the participants' increases. It is natural that adolescents use more intensifiers than the older age groups as adolescence has been described as an age in which "fast change and construction of style – including linguistic style – becomes a crucial part of activity" (Eckert 1997, 163). Using more intensifiers makes the arguments uttered by adolescents more convincing, which is a representation of their style. Using more intensifiers can be seen as a way of distancing themselves from others, on the one hand from the younger age group or children, and on the other from the older adult age group. Adolescents might be using more intensifiers to signal in-group membership as using an intensifier that is not used by older age groups signals exactly that. One viewpoint that can be said to have an influence on the language of adolescents in the peer-group is the role of imitation. Indeed, Bright (1997, 85) maintains that a change in the community happens through imitation, e.g. one adolescent uses a given intensifier or uses a relatively high number of intensifiers and then other adolescents in that speech community adopt this linguistic style.

The use of intensifiers mildly decreases from the adolescence group to the young adult group, which can be credited to the transition from a flexible and easy-going life stage to a more responsible life stage in which people find occupations, possibly get married and start a family. It is said that language standardization happens in young adulthood, especially for young adults that work in language-sensitive occupations (Chambers 2003, 171). Using less intensifiers can be seen as one aspect of language standardization, as the sentences are uttered with less affirmation.

The number of intensifiers used declines significantly from the young adult group to the middle

age group. This can be taken as a reflection of the stereotypical viewpoint; as a person gets older, they become more conservative (Chambers 2003, 166). This conservatism can be linked to our language use (and the use of intensifiers) as language is something by which we interact with the world around us. The faculty of language enables us to utter our beliefs and values, e.g. conservatism towards new things. This conservatism can be seen as lacking development, innovation, and hence, using new or assertive expressions is not favored. The older age group uses the least number of intensifiers in their speech, which is in line with the mentioned theories of becoming more conservative.

Figure 9 below depicts the relative use of the four most popular intensifiers in all four age groups. *Very* seems to be the most popular intensifier in all age categories, but what is interesting is its significantly higher proportion of the variable context in the old age group compared to others. This finding is in line with Tagliamonte's findings (2008, 372) who found that in Toronto, *very* is the most common intensifier in the over 50-year-old category. On the other hand, the use of *very* in ICE-CAN is in line with Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010, 264) who found that there is no statistically significant difference in the use of *very* between age groups.



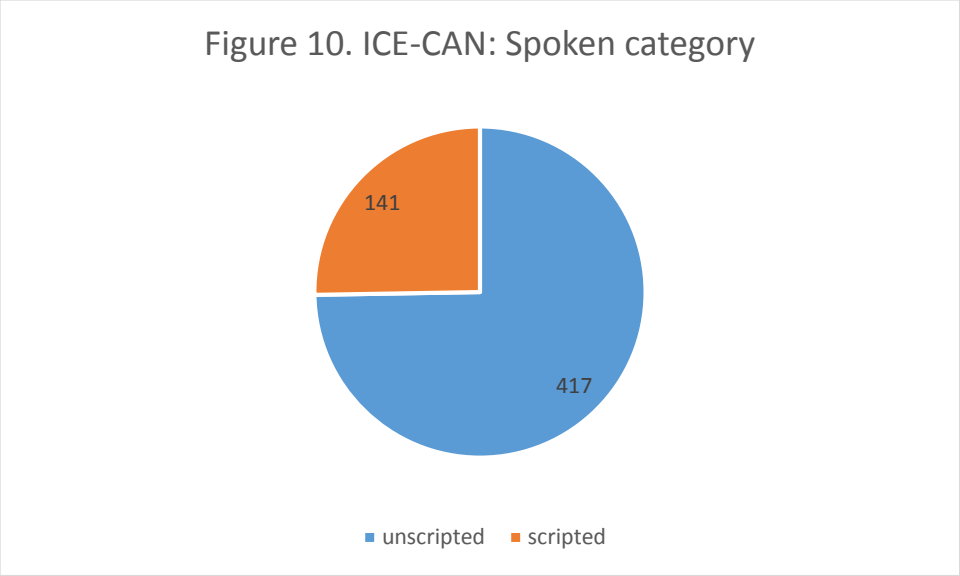
The case of *really* in ICE-CAN is quite striking as comparing the two older groups with the two younger groups shows quite a difference in its popularity. This is in line with the findings of Ito and

Tagliamonte (2003, 277) of York English as well as Murphy's findings (2010, 116) of Irish English. Murphy reported (2010, 132) that *so* is most frequent in the 20s group, falling in use in the 40s group and being more common than this in the older 70s/80s group. There is a similar tendency in my data too as the youngest group have the highest frequency of *so*, then the use declines in the two adult groups and rises in the old age group. Actually, it is the second most commonly used intensifier in the old age group, which is a clear testament of its popularity.

Pretty is most commonly used in the youngest age group and declines all the way to the old age group in which it is the least common out of the four and very low in frequency. This finding could be taken as an indication that *pretty* is recycled in the speech community as it has appeared in the old age group previously, but is now low in frequency and the young are using it more frequently. It remains to be seen whether it will gain more popularity among the young in CanE in the future.

4.1.4 Intensifiers and spoken category

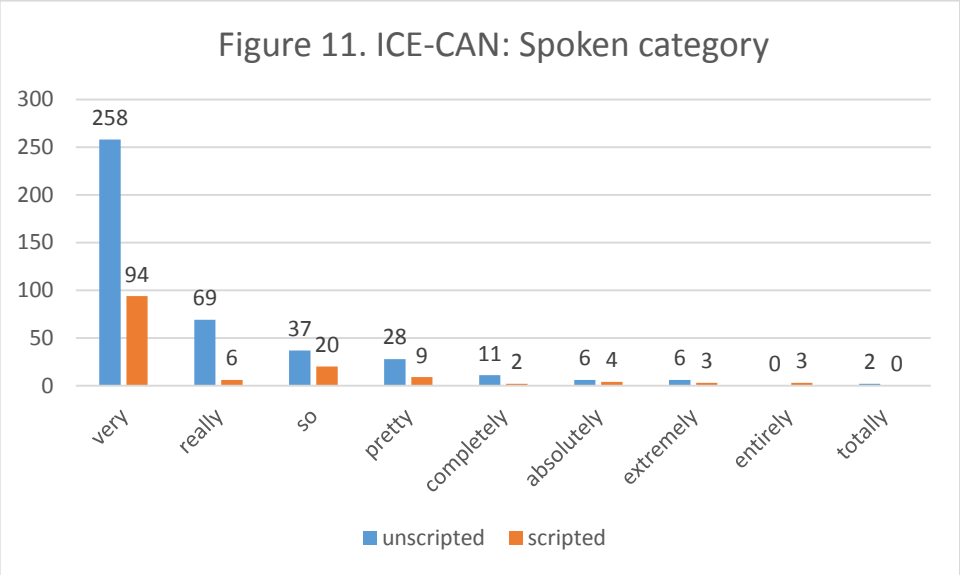
The ICE-corpora are built in a fashion that makes divisions between separate categories and each of the corpora are built in the same way. This made it possible to study the use of intensifiers in two separate categories, scripted and unscripted spoken passages. Scripted passages include broadcast news, broadcast talks and speeches (not broadcast) and the unscripted section includes spontaneous commentaries, unscripted speeches, demonstrations and legal presentations. Of these two, the scripted category is closer to written text types and the unscripted category is spontaneous, and in a way, more representative of spoken language. Previously conducted studies have shown that intensifiers are more common in spoken than in written language, and hence, what might be expected is that the unscripted sections have a higher frequency of intensifiers than the scripted sections. The proportions of each category are shown in figure 10 below.



As can be seen in figure 10, the unscripted passages have a more frequent occurrence of intensifiers with 417 tokens when compared to the scripted sections with 141 tokens. But it has to be noted that the unscripted passages include 70 texts, whereas the scripted section comprise of only 50 texts. Hence, the normalized frequencies are more representative markers of intensifiers between the categories. The normalized frequencies are 27.3 per 10.000 words for the unscripted section and respectively, 13.2 per 10.000 words for the scripted section. This lessens the ratio from approximately 75% to circa 67% in favor of the unscripted sections. So indeed, as expected, intensifiers are more common in the unscripted category than the scripted category in ICE-CAN.

The individual numbers of intensifiers can be seen in figure 11 below. What emerges is the same dominance of *very* as with all spoken categories and that the four most frequently used intensifiers in the whole spoken ICE-CAN appear to be most frequently used in the unscripted section of the corpus. The individual intensifiers that are most common in the unscripted section are *very* (258), *really* (69), *so* (37) and *pretty* (28) with the number of tokens in brackets after each intensifier. The order of intensifiers seems to be the same for the unscripted section of the corpus as it is with the whole corpus. For the scripted section, the most common intensifiers are *very* (94), *so* (20), *pretty* (9) and *really* (6) with the number of tokens in brackets after each intensifier. The order of the most common intensifiers is different for the scripted section as opposed to the whole corpus and the most apparent difference

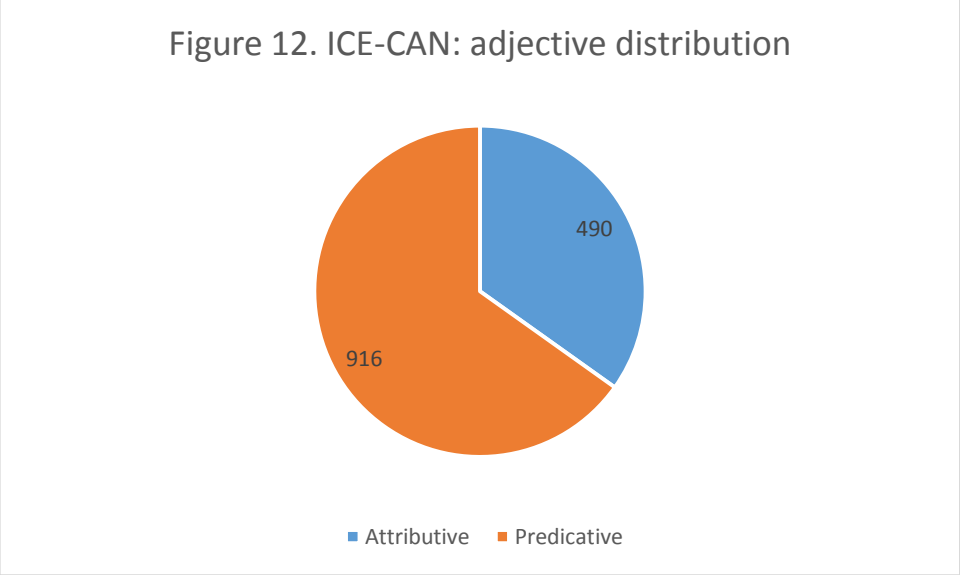
is the low number of *really* for the scripted section (4.3% of the variable context) when compared to the whole corpus in which it is in second place in frequency with 21.1% of the variable context.



The dominance of *very* is quite striking as it occupies 66.7% of the variable context in the scripted section as opposed to 48.8% for the whole corpus. The low number of *really* could be a reflection of the spoken categories of which the scripted section comprises of. *Really* is more colloquial when compared to *very* and even more than *so*. I would contemplate that the type of passages (broadcast news, broadcast talks and speeches (not broadcast)) that make up the scripted section, steer the way towards the more businesslike expressions *very* and *so*. The fact that these sections are scripted and quite businesslike, makes it more likely to use the commonest and most ”neutral” expression *very* as the intensifier of choice. The use of other, more creative intensifiers is not preferred, as TV-broadcasts and non-broadcast speeches aim at a matter-of-fact style rather than a creative, attention-capturing splendor. It would seem that as *really* is quite disfavored in the scripted section, *very* takes over even more of the variable context.

4.1.5 Attributive and predicative uses

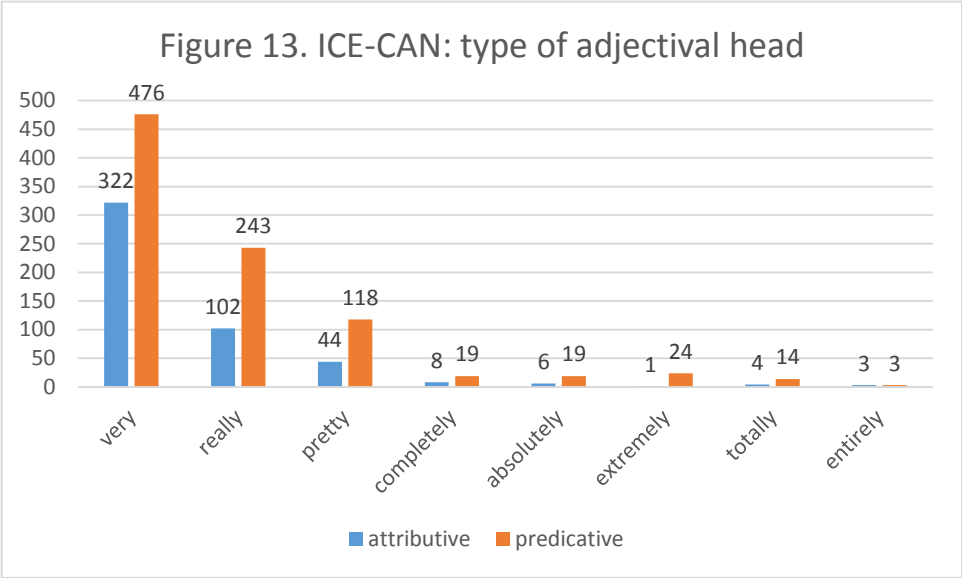
The fifth study question that I had devised asks whether the chosen 11 intensifiers are more commonly used with attributive or predicative adjectives in the ICE-corpora to examine the stage of grammaticalization for the chosen intensifiers. The distribution to attributive and predicative adjectives is illustrated in figure 12 below. The illustration shows that predicative uses are more common in the spoken section of ICE-CAN than attributive uses. The number of tokens for the predicative uses was 916, and for the attributive uses 490 correspondingly. In addition, 60 tokens that appeared in ICE-CAN were left out of this data because of the lack of context, as some of the intensifiers occurred in short two word comments, for instance.



The intensifier *so* was left out of the analysis as the attributive use of *so* is not possible at all as Bauer and Bauer comment: ”it appears that this is a systemic impossibility: **That is a so cool story* is not grammatical” (2002, 251). Taking all the aforementioned matters into count, the final number of tokens for this section was 1406, out of which 65.1% were predicative uses and the remaining proportion for attributive use is hence 34.9%.

The distributions of predicative and attributive uses for each individual intensifier are illustrated by figure 13 below. The predicative use is more frequent for all of the selected intensifiers, except for

entirely which has an even distribution to attributive and predicative adjectives.



Out of the three most commonly used intensifiers, *really* (70.4%) and *pretty* (72.8%) have a higher proportion of predicative uses than the eight intensifiers combined. On the other hand, *very* has a lower proportion of predicative uses than the eight intensifiers with 59.6%. The other intensifiers have a low number of tokens and the percentages that follow may have anomalies that would not be present with a larger sample. Most of the [*-ly*] suffixed intensifiers also have a higher occurrence of predicative uses than all the intensifiers combined: *completely* (70.4%) *absolutely* (76.0%), *extremely* (96.0%) and *totally* (77.8%). *Entirely* has an even distribution to both uses. These results show that *very* is the intensifier that lowers the proportion of predicative uses for all intensifiers to 65.1%. All other intensifiers, except for *extremely* with 6 tokens, have more than a 70% share of predicative uses.

The fact that all of the chosen intensifiers have at least a 50/50 ratio of predicative and attributive adjectives could be taken as evidence that these intensifiers are further in the delexicalization process. Indeed, Tagliamonte states (2008, 373) that if an intensifier has equal numbers of attributive or predicative uses, or a larger proportion of predicative uses, the intensifier might be considered being further in development and delexicalization. What is surprising is that *very* is not leading in predicative use percentages, even though it has been labelled as the ”most prominent case of grammaticalization” by Lorenz (2002, 145). Nonetheless, *very* is widely regarded as the most

grammaticalized intensifier. Furthermore, the newer, open class adverbs *completely* (70.4%) *absolutely* (76.0%), *extremely* (96.0%) and *totally* (77.8%) have higher proportions of predicative uses than very (59.6%). This could be a reflection of the small number of tokens, but is quite interesting altogether.

Tagliamonte ponders (2008, 388) whether *really* has become the second fully delexicalized adjective intensifier in English and my data supports this as *really* occurs with predicative adjectives with a 70.4% frequency. All in all, based on the occurrence with predicative adjectives, I conclude that all of the 8 intensifiers are delexicalized to some extent. If I were to conduct an analysis of collocating adjectives for them, I might be able to state the degree of grammaticalization more accurately.

4.2 ICE-NZ

The number of words for the spoken section of ICE-NZ is 713.512 acquired by the WordList feature of WordSmith 6.0. I used this word count in calculating the normalized frequencies stated in the following section. All of the 11 selected intensifiers occurred in the adjective premodifying position in ICE-NZ and the results are discussed in the following subsections of this chapter.

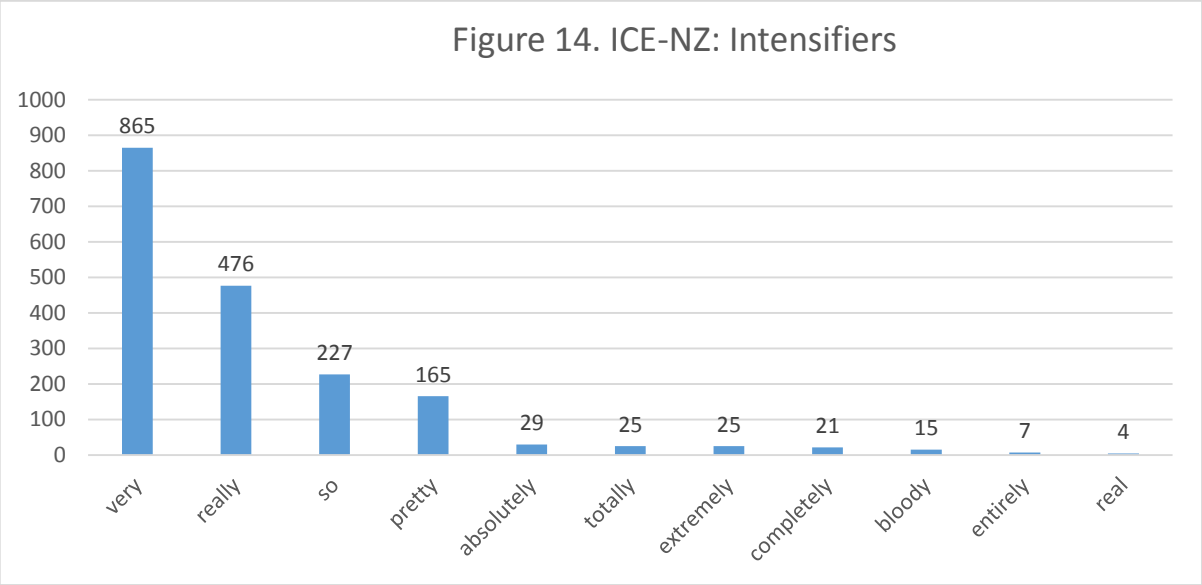
4.2.1 Frequency of intensifiers

The concordance searches conducted for the selected intensifiers for ICE-NZ retrieved 2001 tokens altogether, but when the unwanted contexts were deleted, the final number of tokens was 1859. The number of deleted tokens is thus 142. Examples of the selected 11 intensifiers are listed below in the order of frequency in the spoken section of ICE-NZ.

1. You know she was *very* resourceful, so we cheered up <ICE-NZ:S1B-041#51:1:F>
2. he's been in a *really* funny mood <ICE-NZ:S1A-039#100:1:Q>
3. the big brown eyes and features were *so* lovely <ICE-NZ:S2B-022#55:1:X>
4. her part was *pretty* ridiculous <ICE-NZ:S2A-032#23:1:F>
5. it was just *absolutely* magnetic <ICE-NZ:S1A-082#78:1:J>
6. no that's true he was *totally totally* unrealistic <ICE-NZ:S1A-032#104:1:S>

7. most of them have been *extremely* successful <ICE-NZ:S2A-036#2:1:D>
8. a programme that's *completely* different <ICE-NZ:S2A-035#36:1:A>
9. God it was *bloody* horrible <ICE-NZ:S1B-048#149:1:K>
10. the government regards it as *entirely* reasonable <ICE-NZ:S2A-047#130:1:M>
11. real bad news <ICE-NZ:S1A-047#152:1:B>

Figure 14 below illustrates the number of tokens for each of the selected 11 intensifiers in ICE-NZ. *Very* is the most common intensifier also in the spoken section of ICE-NZ, as was expected, with 865 tokens or 46.5% of the variable context. The second most common intensifier was *really* with 476 tokens or 25.6% of the variable context. Third in popularity was *so* that had 227 tokens or 12.2% of the variable context in spoken ICE-NZ. The fourth most popular intensifier in spoken ICE-NZ was *pretty*, which had 165 tokens that represent 8.9% of the variable context.



All of the selected intensifiers are listed in table 4 below, showing the number of tokens, percentage of the variable context and normalized frequency per 10.000 words. It can be stated that the number of the four most popular intensifiers is altogether quite overpowering as they make up 93.2% of the variable context leaving only little room for the more innovative and rarer intensifiers. All of the selected intensifiers did occur in ICE-NZ, whereas *real* and *bloody* were missing from ICE-CAN.

Intensifier	Number of tokens	Percentage of variable	Normalized frequency
very	865	46.5%	12.123
really	476	25.6%	6.671
so	227	12.2%	3.181
pretty	165	8.9%	2.312
absolutely	29	1.6%	0.406
totally	25	1.3%	0.350
extremely	25	1.3%	0.350
completely	21	1.1%	0.294
bloody	15	0.8%	0.210
entirely	7	0.4%	0.098
real	4	0.2%	0.056

Table 4. Chosen intensifiers in ICE-NZ.

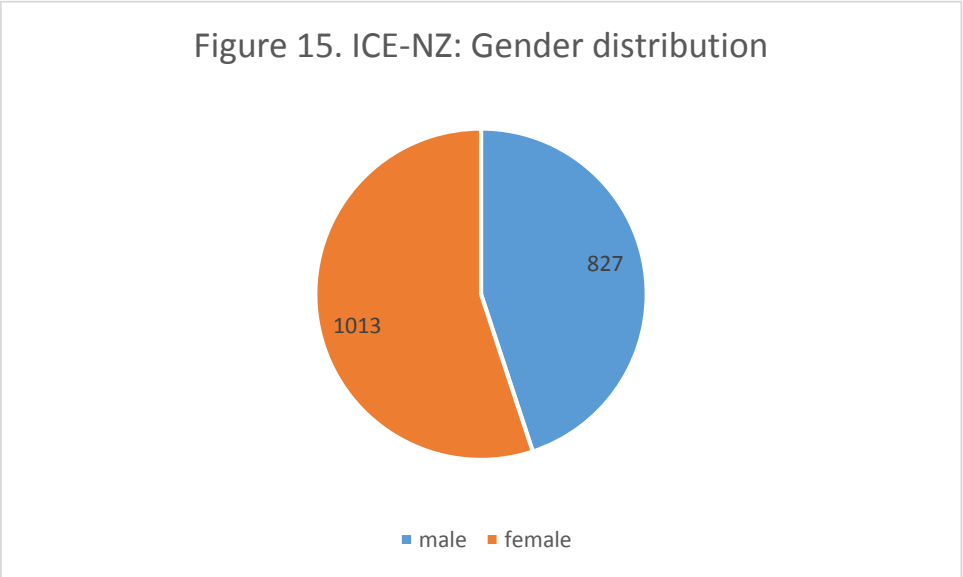
The results that I obtained seem to be in line with other studies, e.g. Ito and Tagliamonte found (2003, 266) that the three most common intensifiers in their York data were *very* (38.3%), *really* (30.2%) and *so* (10.1%). Even the percentages are quite similar to my data, but ICE-NZ has a larger frequency of *very* and a smaller frequency of *really*. The four most commonly used intensifiers *very*, *really*, *so* and *pretty* have been found to be the four most common by Tagliamonte (2008, 368) in CanE, but with the exception that *really* was the most common followed quite equally numbered intensifiers *very*, *so* and *pretty*. Tagliamonte and Roberts found (2005, 287) that in *Friends* the most commonly used intensifiers were *so* (44.1%), *really* (24.6%) and *very* (14.2%). Again, these are the three most commonly used intensifiers in my data, but the order is quite different as *so* is only the third most frequent in my data and *very* is the most commonly used intensifier in the spoken section of ICE-NZ.

What can be stated based on my findings is that *really* is increasing in number in NZE as it has been shown to be in Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010, 267, 270) and Tagliamonte (2008, 368). *Really* has become the second most common intensifier in NZE in the 1990s when the ICE-corpora were collected and furthermore, Bauer & Bauer report (2002, 255) that *really* had become the most commonly used intensifier by adults in the attributive position by 2002. Bauer and Bauer also report

(2002, 250) that *very* is an infrequent intensifier in the use of youngsters, who prefer the intensifiers *really* and *real* over *very*, which is used mainly with words that have negative connotations. Could this mean that there was a change in progress in the turn of the millennium in NZE from preferring *very* to choosing *really* more likely as the intensifier of choice? If I were to conduct an analysis of NZE spoken today, would I find similar results of the overwhelming popularity of *really* as Tagliamonte found (2008, 368) in Toronto in 2008? This would be an interesting point to study further.

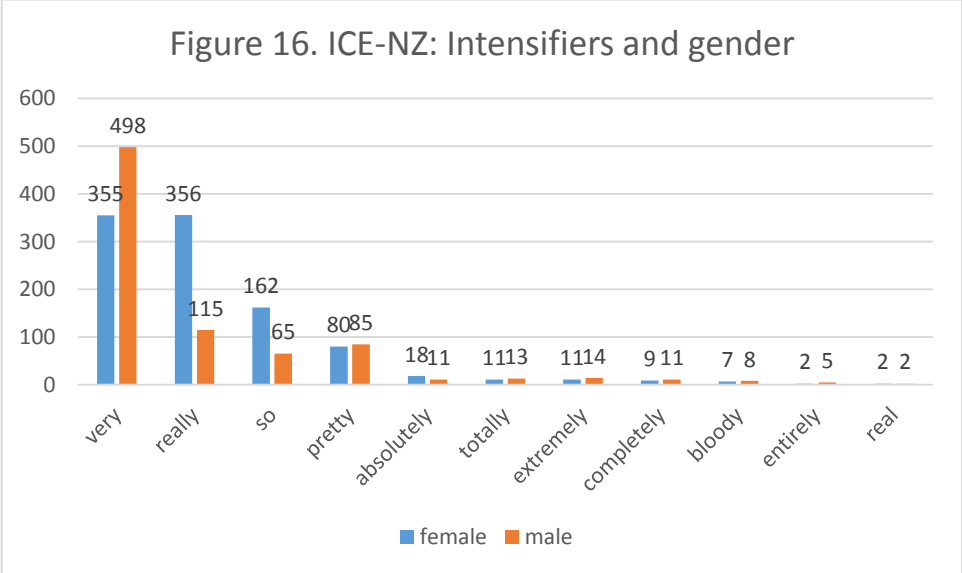
4.2.2 Intensifiers and Gender

The overall gender distribution for the spoken section of ICE-NZ is stated in figure 15 below. The females have 1013 tokens in the spoken section of ICE-NZ and the males have 827 tokens. This makes the total number of tokens 1840, and additionally, 19 tokens were undefined as regards the gender criterion. We can see that the females have a larger proportion of the variable context in ICE-NZ with 54.5% of the variable context as was the case with the spoken section of ICE-CAN. Hence, the percentage of male intensifier usage is 45.5%. Actually the gender distribution for intensifiers is very similar in the two corpora.



The fact that females use more intensifiers than males is to be expected, as previously conducted studies have shown similar results and general sociolinguistic theory posits that women would use more intensifiers to assure their position in the social scene. It would be expected that the females would use even more intensifiers than the males based on earlier studies, e.g. Murphy (2010, 133) who concluded that females use far more intensifiers than males in Irish English.

The females have a larger proportion of the variable context with all intensifiers combined, but how does the situation appear when comparing each individual intensifier's gender distribution? In figure 16 below, we can see that the females have a larger proportion of individual intensifiers *so* and *really* when comparing to the whole corpus. The females have 356 tokens of *really*, which represents 75.6% of usage and leaves only 24.4% for males. It is to be noted that in the spoken section of ICE-NZ, *really* is the most commonly used intensifier by females with one token more than *very*. The females also have a larger proportion of *so* with 162 tokens or 71.4% of the variable. This finding is similar to Tagliamonte and Robert's finding in *Friends* as they state that female characters use twice as much *so* and more *really* than the male characters (2005, 289). Murphy studied Irish English and found (2010, 133) that *really* was used less frequently in the male adult corpus than the female adult corpus, which is also the case in the spoken section of ICE-NZ. Murphy's findings (2010, 115) are similar also in the regard that in Irish English, the most commonly used intensifiers by females were *very*, *really* and *so*.



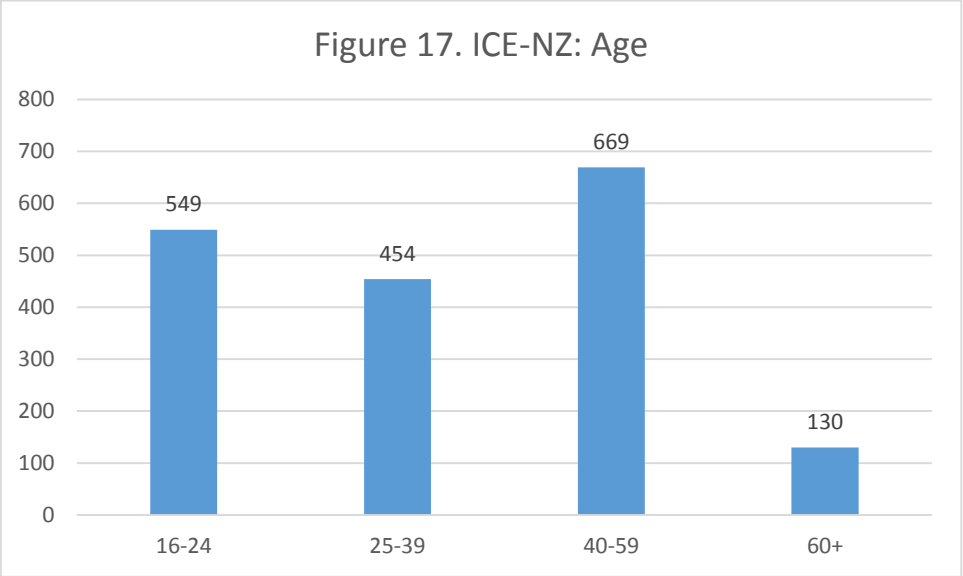
Contrary to the use of *really* and *so*, the males seem to be using *very* more than the females, having 498 tokens, which represents a 58.4% proportion of the selected intensifiers. Out of the four most common intensifiers, *pretty* seems to be the most even in gender distribution, which actually makes it the most neutral in a sense. These findings of the four most commonly used intensifiers appear to be quite similar to the results I obtained with the spoken section of ICE-CAN.

There are some mentionable differences in the more infrequently used intensifiers too as regards the gender criterion. It has to be considered, though, that the numbers are low and thus the results may be skewed by this fact. The distribution might be different had the numbers of occurrences been more frequent. Firstly, *absolutely* seems to be favored by females over males as the female's usage represents 62.1% of this intensifier. Secondly, the intensifiers *totally* (54.2%), *extremely* (56.0%), *completely* (55.0%), *bloody* (53.3%) and *entirely* (71.4%) are more frequent in male's use with percentages in brackets after each intensifier.

The findings reported in this section are quite similar to the findings presented in section 4.1.2 of ICE-CAN. The females tend to use more of the intensifiers *really* and *so* in both of the spoken ICE-corpora, when compared with the males, who have a smaller proportion of these intensifiers. The males prefer to use *very* as the intensifier of choice as it represents 59.2% of the 11 selected intensifiers for males in ICE-CAN and correspondingly 60.2% of the selected intensifiers for males in ICE-NZ. Both sexes use the intensifier *pretty* relatively as frequently in both corpora.

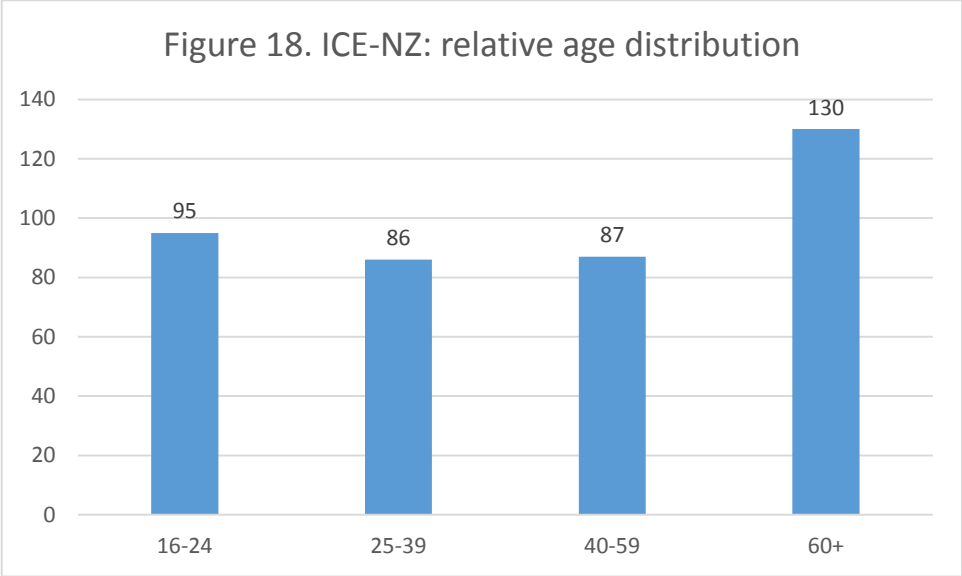
4.2.3 Intensifiers and age

The use of intensifiers has been correlated with the extra-linguistic factor age in previously conducted studies. It has been suggested that young speakers use more intensifier than older speakers. The correlations of the independent variable age and the dependent variable, intensifier use, are shown below in figure 17. It has to be noted that the construction of the two corpora made it impossible to construct exactly the same age categories for both corpora.



Hence, the four age categories for ICE-NZ are the 16 to 24-year-olds for ”adolescence”, the 25 to 39-year-olds for ”young adults”, the 40 to 59-year-olds for ”middle age” and people, who are 60 or older represent the ”old age” category. The age categories are roughly the same as the ones used for analysis with ICE-CAN and they follow the emic approach for both corpora, but there are 1 to 3 year differences between the two corpora in the categories. This could have an effect on how the results turned out, but I do not believe it is too significant.

What we see in figure 17, is that the oldest group uses the least amount of intensifiers as was expected, but the highest amount of intensifiers seems to be used by the middle-age group, which is surprising. I suspect that this could be a reflection of the age categories I have built and that the number of speakers for ICE-NZ actually are not distributed evenly for each age-group. There might be overrepresentations in a given age-group e.g. the middle-aged, so I used the same method as with ICE-CAN and calculated the relative age distribution for each age category. There were 249 people in the ”adolescence” group, 226 people in the ”young adult” group, 332 speakers in the ”middle age” group and 43 speakers in the ”old age” group. The relative distributions for each age category are depicted in figure 18 below.



The relative distributions of intensifiers are different from the distribution of intensifiers into the four age categories presented in figure 17 on the previous page. The ”old age” category speakers seem to have the highest relative frequency of intensifiers, which is quite remarkable, as e.g. Ito and Tagliamonte (2003, 264) state the exact opposite when they say that intensification gradually increases from the oldest to the youngest age group. The relative distributions might be affected quite strongly by individual speakers or *outliers* in the old age category, who use intensifiers with a high frequency, e.g. one individual had 12 instances of *very* in a given sample and another had 9 instances of *very* in another sample conversation. With this in mind, the results are not representative, but only a testament that more research into the matter is needed. The method I have chosen might not be the best and most fitting, so I would recommend that another type of method be used in the later research. The emic approach has its pros and cons: on the hand it tries to capture the developmental stages that are natural for humans, but on the other hand the corpora are built in a way that does not allow using it. The emic approach might be most fitting to use with a corpus that is especially designed with this in mind.

The youngest group has the second most frequent occurrence of the selected 11 intensifiers. The ”young adult” group and the ”middle age” group have an evenly distributed frequency of the selected intensifiers. These results of the relative age distribution of the spoken section of ICE-NZ do

conform to earlier studies better than the ”old age” group. The youngest age group are expected to be using more intensifiers than the other age groups, as has been shown in earlier studies of the matter (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003, 264). Furthermore, in sociolinguistic theory, adolescence is seen as a stage in the life course in which people are characterized by ”fast change and construction of style – including linguistic style” (Eckert 1997, 163). This theory might be interpreted as the adolescents trying to distance themselves from children and adults to form a distinct group. Using more intensifiers than the other groups might be a way by which the adolescents could distance themselves, but the results of the relative age distributions do not fully support this claim.

Previously conducted studies have shown that certain intensifiers are more common in a young age, and on the other hand, some intensifiers are preferred by the older people. Murphy found (2010, 116) in her study of Irish English that *really* was most common in the youngest 20s age group, saw a considerable decrease to the 40s group and declined further from the 40s group to the 70/80s group. Ito and Tagliamonte conclude (2003, 277) that based on their study, using *really* meant that the person was under 35, but using *very* meant that the person was over 35. Murphy had similar results (2010, 116) as the 20s group were using less of *very* than the 40s group. Relative frequencies of the four most common intensifiers by age group are illustrated in figure 19 below.

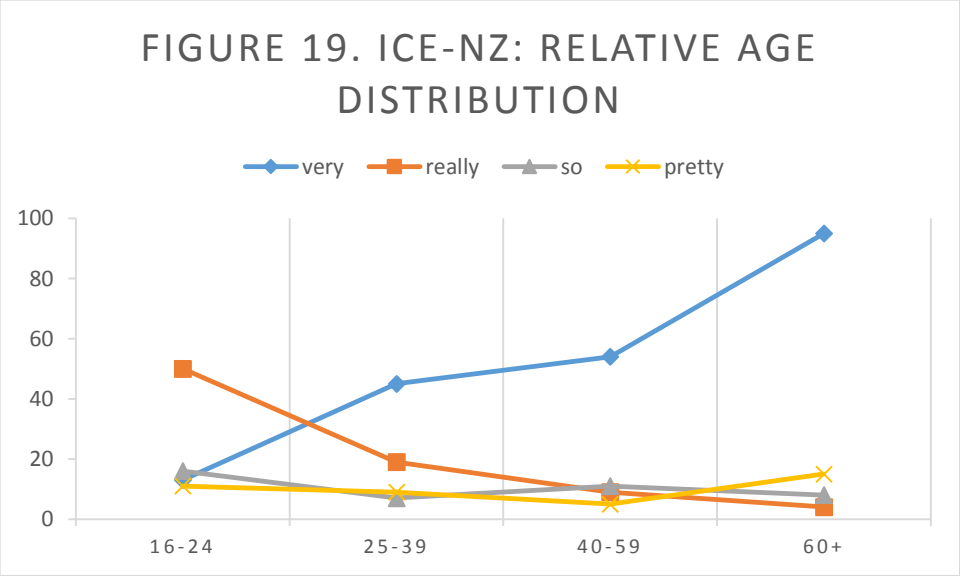


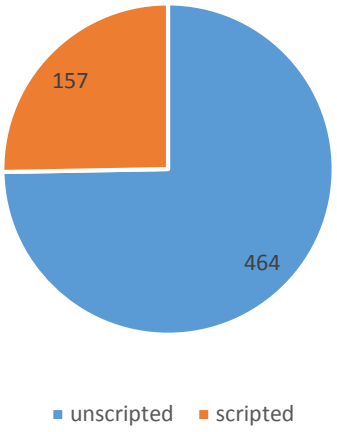
FIGURE 19. ICE-NZ: RELATIVE AGE DISTRIBUTION

The results of the relative age distribution for the four most commonly used intensifiers seem to go quite well with the earlier studies as *very* is the overpowering intensifier of choice in the oldest group and declines all the way to the youngest group. Furthermore, *really* is most commonly used by the youngest age group and its frequency declines all the way to the oldest age group in which it is the least frequent of the four intensifiers. *Really* is also the overwhelmingly most commonly used intensifier by the youngest age group. The fact that *pretty* is the second most commonly used intensifier by the oldest age group in ICE-NZ is surprising as *pretty* is only the fourth most commonly used intensifier in the whole corpus. The relative distributions of the four most commonly used intensifiers are examples of the many layers of intensifiers in NZE and the recycling of intensifiers that happens to capture the intensifying function.

4.2.4 Intensifiers and spoken category

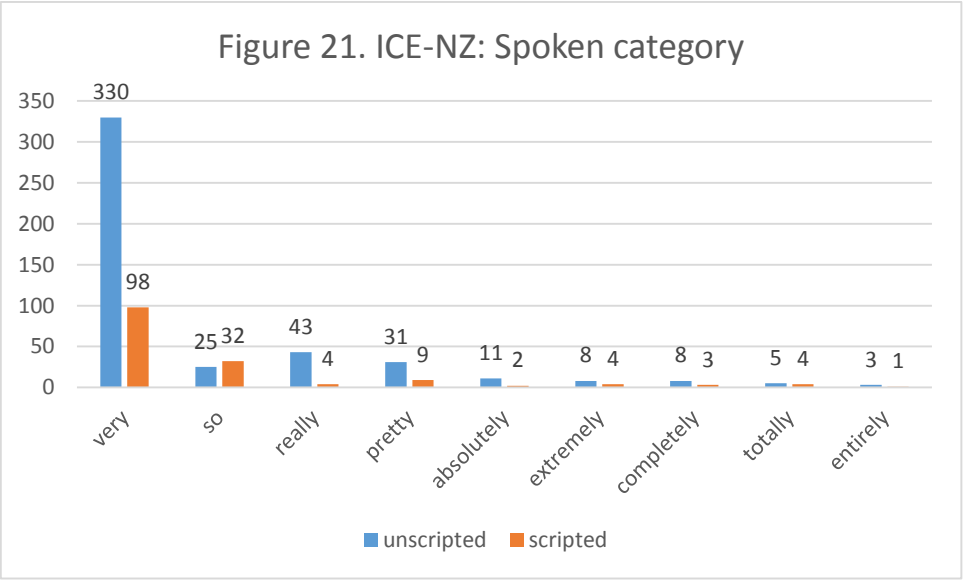
It is assumed that intensifiers are more common in spoken than in written language, so I wanted to study different spoken categories to compare the use of intensifiers in scripted and unscripted spoken passages. Studying these categories was easy as all of the ICE-corpora are built in a similar fashion. It would be assumed based on the given theory that the scripted passages have a smaller rate of intensifiers as opposed to the unscripted, which should have a more frequent rate of intensifiers. The proportions of intensifiers in the two categories are presented in figure 20 below.

Figure 20. ICE-NZ: Spoken category



The distribution seems to be similar to ICE-CAN as the unscripted passages occupy 74.7% of the variable, leaving 25.3 % for the scripted passages. The unscripted passages had 464 tokens and a clearly larger proportion of the two, as the scripted passages had only 157 tokens. But as with ICE-CAN, the unscripted sections consisted of 70 passages, whereas the scripted passages consisted only of 50 passages, so the normalized frequencies are more informative in a sense. The normalized frequency for the selected 11 intensifiers in the unscripted section was 26.6 / 10.000 words and 13.3 / 10.000 words for the scripted section. Hence, the normalized frequency of the unscripted passages is exactly twice the number of the normalized frequency of the scripted passages.

The number of tokens for each individual intensifier in the unscripted and scripted passages are given in figure 21 below. *Very* seems to be quite overpowering in the scripted and unscripted categories as it occupies 68.9% of the variable context in the unscripted and scripted sections combined as opposed to 46.5% for the whole corpus. Could this fact be explained by the types of passages that make up the scripted and unscripted sections?



These passages include broadcast news, broadcast talks, speeches, demonstrations and legal presentations. Maybe the use of *very* as the chosen intensifier is the easy choice, as it is most commonly used in NZE and is characterized as the most delexicalized intensifier (Peters 1994, 270). Delexicalization refers to the intensifier losing its lexical meaning and this allows it to be used for

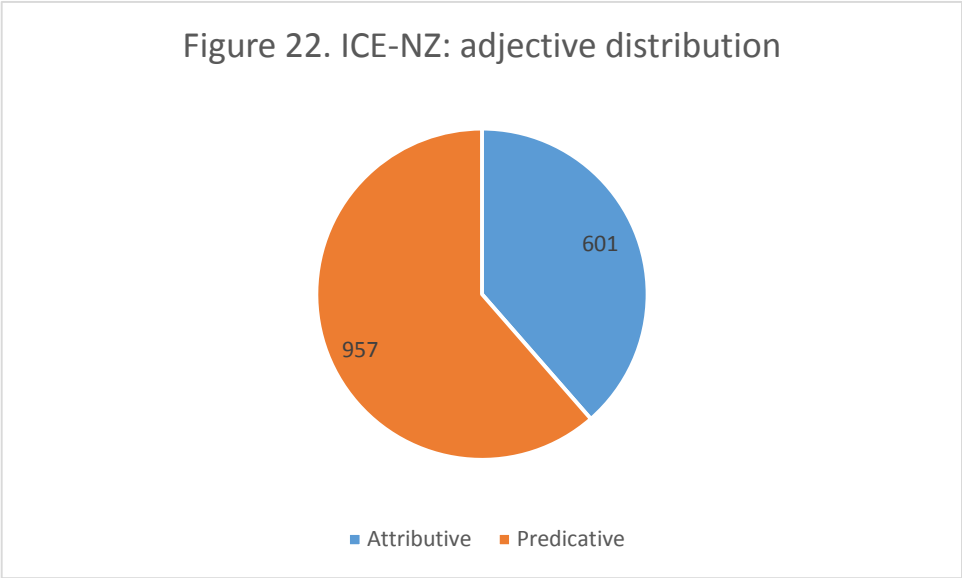
emphasis only, and this in turn, opens a chance for *very* being used with a wide range of adjectives. Having no strict collocates as some intensifiers have and having the emphasis only use, makes *very* a good choice for any context.

The unscripted passages have an overpowering use of *very* (71.1%). This could be explained by the fact that *very* is most delexicalized of English intensifiers and hence fits to be used with any possible context for the intensifying function. The unscripted passages comprise of spontaneous commentaries, unscripted speeches, demonstrations and legal presentations, and one might think that these are contexts in which the speaker does not have time to be thinking about his speech production and intensifier choice that much and hence would resort to the most commonly used intensifier, *very* that comes naturally. *Very* is followed by *really* (9.3%), *pretty* (6.7%) and *so* (5.4%) as the intensifiers that have more than 20 tokens. This means that *so* has given way to *pretty* and all of the three have lost some of their share in the unscripted section as compared to the total corpus.

The proportions of the four most commonly used intensifiers for the spoken ICE-NZ are the following for the scripted section: *very* (62.4%), *so* (20.4%), *really* (2.5%) and *pretty* (5.7%). The order is quite different for the scripted section as *so* is the second most popular, *pretty* is the third and *really* is relatively low in frequency in fourth place. The fact that *really* is so infrequent in the scripted passages may have to do with the simple fact that these passages are scripted and *really* might be considered to be colloquial as opposed to e.g. *very*, which is more matter-of-fact and does not have this connotation and in a sense is the most neutral intensifier.

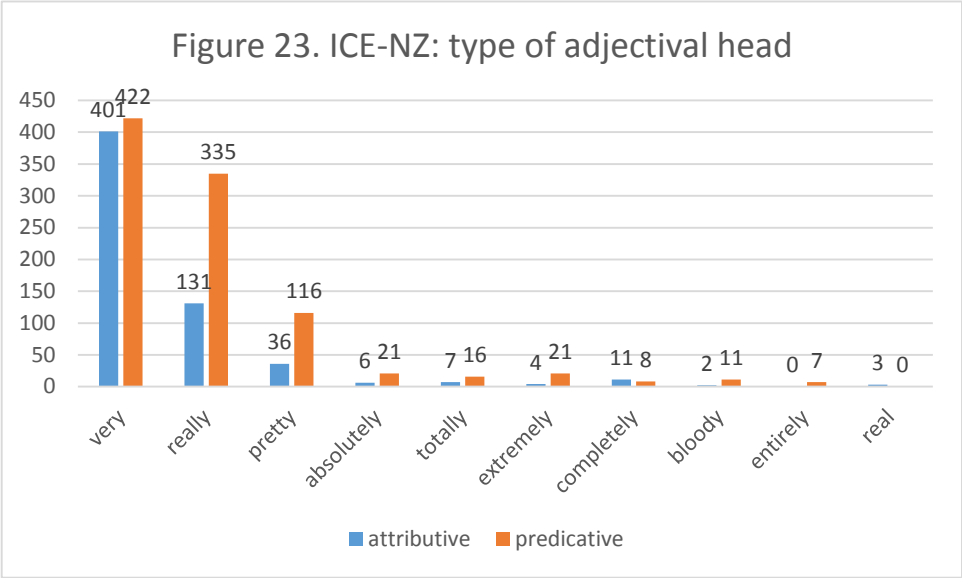
4.2.5 Attributive and predicative uses

The last section of the analysis of ICE-NZ deals with the different contexts of use for intensifiers: predicative and attributive uses. I am interested in the topic as it has been contemplated in previously published studies that predicative use would be a sign of a higher stage of delexicalization of a given intensifier (Tagliamonte 2008, 373).



The distribution to predicative and attributive adjectives is illustrated by figure 22 above, and as we notice, there were more predicative adjectives than attributive adjectives in the spoken section of ICE-NZ. More precisely there were 957 tokens of predicative uses and 601 tokens of attributive uses, so the total number of tokens for adjective distribution in ICE-NZ was 1558. I had to leave out 74 tokens, because they lacked proper context to label them attributive or predicative, e.g. short two word comments had to be left out. The intensifier *so* had to be left out of the analysis too based on the ungrammaticality of attributive uses of *so* as was mentioned in the analysis of ICE-CAN. The number of tokens mark a distribution of 61.4% as predicative adjectives and 38.6% as attributive adjectives.

The distribution for each individual intensifier into attributive and predicative adjectives is illustrated by figure 23 below. As can be seen in the figure, the predicative use is more common with all of the selected intensifiers except for *completely* and *real*, that have larger proportions of attributive than predicative uses.



Out of the three most common intensifiers, *really* (71.9%) and *pretty* (76.3%) have a relatively high proportion of predicative adjectives versus attributive adjectives. These results go quite nicely with Tagliamonte's (2008, 388) who ponders whether *really* has become the second fully delexicalized adjective intensifier in English. On the contrary to *really* and *pretty*, *very* has almost an even distribution to predicative (51.3%) and attributive (48.7%) adjectives. This might be a bit surprising as *very* has been labelled as the ”most prominent case of grammaticalization” by Lorenz (2002, 145).

The percentages of predicative adjectives for the other intensifiers are: *absolutely* (77.8%), *totally* (69.6%), *extremely* (84.0%), *completely* (42.1%), *bloody* (84.6%), *entirely* (100%) and *real* (0%). It has to be borne in mind, that the number of tokens for the rarer intensifiers are so small that the results may have anomalies that would not be present in a larger sample. It would seem that, based on my data from ICE-NZ, most of the intensifiers are in fact delexicalized, if we apply the categorization of Tagliamonte (2008, 373). The data also conforms to Buchstaller and Barnfield's comment (2010, 275-276) of the intensification system moving towards increasing predication, as most of the selected intensifiers have a larger proportion of predicative uses in both ICE-CAN as well as ICE-NZ.

5. Results

In this chapter, I will summarize the results of the corpus analysis I have conducted and recapitulate how the results go together with previously conducted studies and theories of intensification. The first study question was ”*Which intensifiers are most common in each variety of English and why are they most common*?”. It turned out that both ICE-CAN and ICE-NZ had the same four most popular intensifiers: *very*, *really*, *so* and *pretty*. Even the percentages of the four most popular intensifiers out of the selected 11 intensifiers in both corpora were within 5 percentage points, so all in all, the results are quite similar for both corpora in this regard. These most commonly used intensifiers in my data have been found to be among the most frequent in previously conducted studies too, see for instance Ito & Tagliamonte 2003, Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005 and Tagliamonte 2008.

One difference between the corpora is that in ICE-CAN, there were no tokens of *bloody* or *real*, but otherwise both corpora had tokens for all of the selected intensifiers. The [-ly] suffixed intensifiers were relatively infrequent in both ICE-CAN and ICE-NZ and the numbers of tokens varied between 6 and 29, with the percentage of intensifiers varying between 0.3% to 1.6%.

The second study question was ”*Does the gender of the speaker affect the choice and frequency of intensifiers and why*?. Both ICE-CAN and ICE-NZ had more intensifiers spoken by females. The percentages for female's intensifier usage over the male's intensifier usage were 54.0% in ICE-CAN and 54.5% in ICE-NZ correspondingly. Again, the gender distribution for intensifiers used is almost identical for both corpora. The percentages are lower than expected to be in regards earlier research, as for instance Murphy states (2010, 133) that females use far more intensifiers than males. In light of general sociolinguistic theory, the females should be using more expressive language (Labov 1990, 214) and they should be using more intensifiers to assure their position in the community by linguistic means as Trudgill comments (1972, 183) that females are rated based on how they appear rather than by what they do.

There were only slight differences in the choice of intensifier between the two corpora. The four most commonly used intensifiers had roughly the same gender distribution in both corpora. Indeed,

the results show that the males lead the way in using *very* more than the females, but the females lead by using *so* and *really* more than the males in both corpora. The results that females use more of the intensifiers *so* and *really* can be linked to historical theories of intensification that posit that females use more intensifiers because of the fondness for hyperbole (Stoffel 1901, 101) and (Jespersen 1922, 250). The distribution for *pretty* is quite even, but the males lead in both corpora by 5 tokens.

The third study question was ”*Does the age of the speaker affect the choice and frequency of intensifiers and why?*”. I divided the speakers into four age categories in both corpora following the emic approach and the corpora had different results to this question. The relative age distribution for ICE-CAN had a nicely descendent pattern for the number of intensifiers, as was expected in regard to previously conducted studies (e.g. Ito and Tagliamonte 2003, 264). On the other hand, ICE-NZ did not have a similar relative age distribution for the selected age categories. The surprise was that the oldest age group had the highest relative frequency of intensifiers, otherwise there was a more expected pattern visible. I ponder whether this could have been caused by *outliers* in the oldest age group that had a well above average number of intensifiers.

For individual intensifiers, the results were that in ICE-CAN, *very* was the most frequently used intensifier across all age categories. On the other hand, in ICE-NZ, *very* had a distinct rising pattern in which the relative frequency rose from each age group to the next and *very* was the overpowering intensifier of choice for the oldest 60+ age group. *Really* had a similar pattern in both corpora, as the relative frequencies were higher in the youngest two groups and dropped gradually in the two oldest age groups.

The fourth study question was ”*Which intensifiers are most common in scripted and in unscripted sections of the ICE corpora?*”. The most common intensifiers for the unscripted passages of ICE-CAN were *very*, *really*, *so* and *pretty* which is the same order as with the whole corpus. ICE-NZ had a small difference in the order of most popular intensifiers in the unscripted passages when compared to the whole corpus as the order was: *very*, *really*, *pretty* and *so*. For the scripted passages the order is the following for both ICE-CAN and ICE-NZ: *very*, *so*, *pretty* and *really*. Here we see that *really*

has fallen behind and the number of tokens is also very small with 6 (ICE-CAN) and 4 (ICE-NZ) tokens if we compare it to the situation with the whole corpus in which it was second most frequent and had hundreds of tokens in both corpora. It would truly seem that *really* is disfavored as an intensifier in the adjective premodifying position in scripted passages of the corpora. I contemplate that this could be a reflection of the colloquial tone *really* has and is hence left out of the more businesslike conversations that are scripted, such as news.

The fifth and last study question to answer was ”*Which context, attributive or predicative, do the selected intensifiers occur most? What might be the reason for this?*”. Most of the selected intensifiers were occurring more in the predicative position in both corpora. Out of the three most common intensifiers, *really* and *pretty*, had a larger relative occurrence in the predicative position. This is a bit surprising as the most popular intensifier, *very*, is thought to be the most delexicalized intensifier and would hence be occurring more in the predicative position, which reflects stage in development as well as delexicalization according to Tagliamonte (2008, 373).

6. Conclusion

The results to the research questions I set out to answer are quite similar in both corpora. The most popular intensifiers were *very*, *really*, *so* and *pretty* for both corpora. It turned out that females do use more intensifiers in both corpora than the males, but the proportion of usage could have been even larger in regard to earlier research. Nonetheless, the hypothesis that females use more intensifiers than males can be confirmed in ICE-CAN and ICE-NZ.

The age related research question was the one that had the most varied results between the corpora, as ICE-CAN had the expected pattern of the young using more intensifiers, but in ICE-NZ, the oldest age group had the highest relative frequency of intensifiers, which was truly unexpected considering earlier studies on intensification and general sociolinguistic theory. I suspect that the fact that I had to devise slightly different age groups for each corpus could have had an effect on the results. Additionally, ICE-CAN lacked the age criterion for more than half of the participants and this surely had an effect on the results. If I were to conduct a study like this again with ICE-data, I would probably choose the etic approach instead of the emic approach, as the corpora are most likely stratified to fit the etic analysis method better.

I found that intensifiers are more common in the unscripted passages than the scripted passages for both ICE-CAN and ICE-NZ. *Very* was an overpowering intensifier in these categories. *Really* was actually very infrequent in the scripted passages, which is quite contrary to the whole corpora in which it is the second most popular intensifier. Lastly, I found that most of the selected intensifiers occurred more with predicative adjectives than attributive adjectives that supports a claim for their delexicalization.

It would be interesting to see, how the chosen intensifiers are used by different social classes. In addition, it would be worthwhile to conduct a longitudinal analysis of intensifiers in CanE and NZE to see how the intensification system is changing. These ideas could provide fruitful ground for future research in the intensification system of English.

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APPENDIX

The frequencies of intensifiers are based on the following word count obtained with the help of Wordsmith Tools 6.0 wordlist feature.

ICE-CAN: 641.877.

ICE-NZ: 713.512.